

11/2/23 Thursday

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Photos: Seven Dead in Western Europe as Storm Ciaran Brings Record Winds

Ahead of its landfall in the UK on Thursday, Storm Ciaran, an extratropical cyclone, underwent rapid intensification in a manner similar to the sudden strengthening of Hurricane Otis, which impacted Mexico's Guerrero State last week as a Category 5 hurricane.

When Storm Ciaran arrived on France's Atlantic coast early Thursday, it brought winds of up to 118 miles per hour - the equivalent power of a Category 3 hurricane.

The violent winds battered homes and businesses, knocking out windows and tearing down trees, causing chaos in western France and Great Britain. According to French authorities, 1.2 million people were without power in the country on Thursday, including half of all homes in Brittany, France's westernmost province which sits on a peninsula. One gust of wind in Finistère was clocked at 129 miles per hour.

At least two people in France have died during the storm, including a truck driver and an elderly man who fell from his balcony in Normandy.

The storm has also battered northern Spain, where heavy rains and gale-force winds had a similar destructive effect, killing at least one person. In Belgium, two more have been reported killed in the storm, along with one person in Germany and one in the Netherlands. Hundreds more have been reported injured by the storm across Western Europe.

However, the storm's eye passed over southern England and Wales, where the fierce winds sparked tornado watches, with at least one striking Jersey, one of the islands in the English Channel. More than 127,000 were without power in the UK, but widespread flooding had effectively shut down most forms of transportation. UK media quoted one resident as saying the scale of destruction was "like a disaster movie."

Britain's Met Office confirmed Storm Ciaran had set a new record for the lowest mean sea level pressure recorded in England in November, beating a record previously set in 1916. Barometric pressure is another method of judging a cyclone's intensity.

By late Thursday, Ciaran had significantly weakened and its center was over the North Sea, on track to pass through the Skagerrak and hit southwestern Sweden.

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What is the US' Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile?

Early Thursday, the US Air Force (USAF) was forced to blow up an unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) over the Pacific Ocean during a routine test of the weapon.

According to the US Department of Defense, the missile was fired from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California toward the Kwajalein Atoll in the South Pacific, where it operates a test site. However, the test was aborted in mid-flight “due to an anomaly,” which the Pentagon described as “any unexpected event during the test” that “may arise from many factors relating to the operational platform itself, or the test equipment.”

The US carries out such tests typically twice a year, which “helps the command evaluate the Minuteman III and gather data to keep the system effective,” [the Pentagon said](#).

Sputnik spoke with Dr. Matthew Crosston, professor of national security and director of the Office of Academic Transformation at Bowie State University in Maryland, about the missile and its properties.

Development

“Historically, the Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile has always been the backbone foundation of the United States military's ‘deterrence weaponry’, i.e., its land-based strategic nuclear force,” Crosston said.

The LGM-30 Minuteman III is the third iteration of the Minuteman series of ICBMs, the first of which entered service in 1962. The missile is named after the famed “minutemen” militias of the American War of Independence, who formed the backbone of the irregular American forces fighting the British Army.

The first Minuteman was designed to attack cities in the Soviet Union in case the US was attacked first, but after the US developed submarine-launched ballistic missiles, the Minuteman II was developed with greater accuracy and throw weight for striking hardened Soviet military targets. Later, the Minuteman III was unveiled in 1970, which could carry three nuclear warheads - a dangerous new development called a MIRV (multiple independent reentry vehicle) arrangement.

“The Minuteman III's specific capability is by definition unique, given it is the only land-based leg of the US nuclear triad,” Crosston explained.

“It was the first MIRV missile system for the US, which means it has greater versatility and capacity upon orbital reentry - i.e., a single missile is capable of targeting three separate locations. There are many other technical details that make it unique, but these specifications are really only relevant to high-level engineers and computer scientists adept with nuclear materials.”

What's the Range of Minuteman III?

While the first Minuteman missiles had a range of about 5,500 miles, putting most of the former Soviet Union in range from the northern US, the Minuteman III ICBM has a reported range of 8,700 miles, enabling it to strike almost anywhere on the planet aside from a certain area on the direct opposite side of the globe from the launch site.

How High Does Minuteman III Fly?

At its zenith, the reentry vehicle carrying the warheads is 700 miles above the Earth. That is higher than the International Space Station's orbit of 253 miles up, for which the Minuteman III has a three-stage rocket to lift it.

How Many Minuteman III Missiles Does the US Have?

“The current arsenal consists of about 400 Minuteman III missiles that are located in hardened underground silos in the upper Midwest of America and operated ‘off-grid’ in the sense that they

are not dependent on larger power systems or interdependent connected systems of communication and control,” Crosston explained.

However, at the time of its greatest extent, the US nuclear arsenal included more than 1,000 Minuteman III missiles.

How Many Warheads Does Each Missile Carry?

When it was introduced, the Minuteman III was designed to carry three W62 Mk12 nuclear warheads, each of which had an explosive yield of 170 kilotons. This was far less than the W56 warhead placed on the Minuteman I and II missiles, which had reduced accuracy and so were given massive 1.2 megaton warheads.

Later, the W62s were replaced with larger W78 warheads, which had an explosive yield of 330-350 kilotons each - about 10 times more powerful than the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

When the US and Russia ratified the START II treaty in 1993, the agreement banned MIRV missiles, and the US removed two of the three warheads atop the Minuteman III missiles, leaving just one each.

However, beginning in 2005, the USAF began replacing some of the W78s atop Minuteman IIIs with the W87 warheads that used to be atop the now-decommissioned LGM-118 Peacekeeper ICBMs, because the new W87s had some safety features the older W78s were not designed with. The W87 was introduced with a 300-kiloton nuclear explosive yield, but the Pentagon attempted to upgrade that to 450 kilotons at one point, and it's unknown if they were successful.

How Old Are the Minuteman IIIs?

The first Minuteman III missiles entered service with the USAF in 1970, with construction of all Minuteman IIIs completed in 1976, making the newest Minuteman III no less than 47 years old.

Are Such Malfunctions Pushing the Pentagon to Replace the LGM-30s?

Crosston said it was “hard to ascertain” whether malfunctions such as that which caused Thursday’s test to be aborted were accelerating the Pentagon’s desire to replace the Minuteman III with a new ICBM dubbed the [LGM-35 Sentinel](#), which it hopes to roll out by 2029.

“What is established is the fact that the Minuteman system overall has existed since the 1950s and there has long been talk within the corridors of the Pentagon about the need to at least discuss the development of new systems and/or replacements, given how much technology has advanced in the previous two decades,” he said. “Since replacement talk has existed for so long, I find it less likely that recent malfunctions or unsuccessful tests fully account for renewed interest.”

“The reality is American defense has, historically, always been passionately obsessive with the creation of new weapons systems and increased and unique capabilities. The need for American military dominance to always be maintained and preserved means, by default, that old systems get replaced by new systems.”

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New House Speaker: 'Growing Recognition We Will Need Another Stopgap Funding Measure'

US House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) admitted for the first time on Thursday that Congress is unlikely to pass the essential funding bills it needs to in order to avoid a federal government shutdown, requiring a second interim funding bill to be passed.

Asked about the possibility by reporters, Johnson said "it's yet to be determined," but noted that "everyone here recognizes, just because we're running out of time, that we may not get all this done by November 17," the day the previous continuing resolution, passed on September 30, expires.

"As quickly as we're moving the appropriations bills here, the Senate's a little behind, and obviously we have the conference committee process and all of that," he said. "So, there's a growing recognition that we are going to need another stopgap funding measure."

Johnson added that he wanted the bill to fund the federal government through January 15, but admitted the GOP would have to "build consensus" around that proposal, indicating it was not widely supported.

According to reports, at a meeting earlier this week between Johnson and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), who leads the Republicans in the Senate, he also floated the idea of an extension until March or April, pushing the highly political fight over spending levels to within months of the November 2024 elections. McConnell gave no indication of his thoughts at the closed-door conference, according to anonymous attendees who spoke with US media.

Congress has a dozen major spending bills to pass that together constitute the 2024 budget. However, the level and recipients of that spending has been in even greater contention than normal, with not just Republicans and Democrats disagreeing with each other along party lines, but also dissent within the GOP ranks about not just spending priorities, but how much of a political fight the party should be willing to make over them.

After then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) decided to agree to the stopgap funding bill on September 30 instead of [let the government shut down](#) as an additional point of leverage on the Democrats, as some in his party had hoped, those dissidents moved to oust him from the leadership in a historic October 3 vote.

However, with the clock ticking on the 45-day funding extension, House Republicans, who command a very narrow majority, took three weeks to elect a replacement. With the chamber unable to continue with other business [before electing a Speaker](#), the budget bills have remained in limbo.

An added hurdle is the differing priorities of Johnson, a far-right stalwart of former US President Donald Trump, and McConnell, an old guard Republican. Johnson has insisted on separating a [massive funding bill](#) requested by the White House into a bill for Ukraine and another for Israel, while McConnell has sided with US President Joe Biden in insisting that the two countries receive aid from the same spending bill.

According to US media reports on Thursday, Johnson has suggested to Senate Republicans that the two would be passed in quick succession, rather than drawing out debate on the more controversial Ukraine funding bill, in an attempt to win them over.

Without either the budget bills or a stopgap funding measure passed by the deadline, many non-essential functions of the federal government will be [forced to shut down](#), with thousands of employees furloughed without pay - a situation that could damage the US economy as well as

Washington's image internationally. After another high-stakes showdown over government spending ended in late May with an agreement possibly just days before the federal government would have been forced to default on its debt payments, international credit rating agency [Moody's downgraded](#) the US' credit rating.

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Expert: US Has 'Proven Track Record' of Making, Breaking Arms Control Deals to Gain Advantage

An expert told Sputnik that Washington was likely agreeing to arms control talks with China in order to project an image of reasonableness to the world, rather than to deescalate the potential for a nuclear conflict to break out.

The Chinese Foreign Minister has revealed that representatives from Beijing and Washington will [meet next week](#) to discuss nuclear arms control - a topic rarely discussed by the two nuclear superpowers.

The meeting comes weeks after [a Pentagon report](#) indicated China's small [nuclear weapons arsenal](#) was growing at a rate faster than Washington experts had expected. The US lacks precise intelligence on China's arsenal, with the October [report estimating China has](#) some 500 nuclear warheads and anticipating they will have 1,000 by 2030. However, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists [nonprofit said in March](#) that China has 410 nuclear warheads. By contrast, the US has more than 5,000 nuclear weapons.

Brian Berletic, a former US Marine and an independent geopolitical researcher and writer, told Sputnik that the US had likely agreed to the talks in order to appear like it is trying to reach an accommodation with China, against which it has been ramping up its military and political antagonisms in recent years.

"In the past, the US has [made, then broken, arms control deals](#) with other nations primarily to appear to be pursuing a diplomatic resolution to tensions with other nations, while in reality sabotaging the deals to then accuse their adversaries of posing a threat to global peace and stability," he explained.

"We've seen the US do this repeatedly to Russia and now Iran. It appears they would like to pursue a similar formula with China. It's unlikely China would allow the US to leverage such a deal to gain intelligence on Chinese nuclear capabilities."

He noted that "if the US thought it was possible to constrain or reverse Chinese nuclear capabilities I think they would try, especially under the guise of an arms control treaty."

"In the worst-case scenario, the United States would like to create a situation where it would have an overabundance of nuclear weapons to use against China in a first strike, having developed what it hopes are significant anti-missile capabilities and also hoping that whatever damage China does in retaliation would give it the advantage emerging from a nuclear exchange," he said.

"While this calculus seems unthinkable to ordinary people, the US spent decades throughout the Cold War making such plans and continues encircling both Russia and China with nuclear weapons in an apparent continuation of this mindset."

Berletic dismissed the notion of a trilateral treaty between the US, Russia, and China, as Washington has long said it hopes to obtain.

"The US has a proven track record of making, then breaking treaties, agreements, and policies of all kinds. The US is waging a proxy war against Russia at this moment because of its broken promises regarding the expansion of NATO and its undermining of the Minsk Agreements," he noted.

"Tensions continue rising between the US and China specifically because of Washington's violation of [its own 'One China' policy](#). Until it can uphold these previous policies, it cannot be trusted to uphold these much more important arms-control agreements."

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UN Denounces Israeli Bombing of Gaza Refugee Camp as Possible 'War Crime'

Calls for a ceasefire or humanitarian pause in Gaza are increasing as images from Israeli airstrikes on hospitals and refugee camps have shocked the international world.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "is appalled over the escalating violence in Gaza" in the wake of Israeli airstrikes on Gaza's largest refugee camp on Tuesday and Wednesday, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

The airstrike on Tuesday killed at least 47 people and wounded scores more. The death toll for the attack on Wednesday is not yet available, but the Palestinian Ministry of Health said its toll was in the "dozens."

Guterres is particularly concerned about "the killing of Palestinians, including women and children in Israeli airstrikes in residential areas of the densely populated Jabalia refugee camp." Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Office posted on X that the bombing may have been "disproportionate" and "could amount to war crimes."

Israel claimed it was targeting Hamas commander Ibrahim Biari, and also claimed the attack killed "many terrorists." Hamas has denied that any members of its leadership was at the camp at the time of the attack. Hamas also claimed seven hostages taken during its surprise October 7 attack were killed in the Israeli bombing, including three foreign passport holders.

"This is just the latest atrocity to befall the people of Gaza where the fighting has entered an even more terrifying phase, with increasingly dreadful humanitarian consequences," Martin Griffiths, the UN humanitarian chief, said in a statement shortly after visiting Gaza.

At least 70 UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) workers have been killed since the conflict began, likely in Israeli airstrikes. On Wednesday, Dujarric announced the head of the UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, managed to get into Gaza through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. Lazzarini is the highest-ranking UN official to visit the region since the Israeli bombing campaign began. Dujarric said Lazzarini told him that fuel and humanitarian policy is needed in Gaza "more than ever."

On Wednesday, the director of the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital, the only hospital in Gaza still serving cancer patients, was forced to shut down after it ran out of fuel. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, 16 of the region's 35 hospitals are no longer functioning. Israel has blockaded Gaza, preventing fuel from entering the region.

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Data Analysis Reveals RFK Jr. Shares More Donors With Trump Than Biden

Robert F Kennedy Jr, 69, initially launched his campaign as a Democratic primary challenger to US President Joe Biden but has since switched to an independent campaign. Weeks earlier, he alleged the Democratic Party was "rigging" the Democratic primary.

An analysis of presidential hopeful Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s campaign donations has revealed the independent candidate is attracting more supporters of former US President Donald Trump than supporters of current President Joe Biden, suggesting his campaign may draw from more potential Trump voters than potential Biden voters.

However, the same analysis shows the majority of Kennedy's large campaign donations came from people who did not donate in the past two election cycles, suggesting he has galvanized an electorate not excited by the candidates offered by the two major US parties.

During the last election fundraising cycle, which ended on September 30, Kennedy raised \$10 million. Nearly \$2 million of that came from 2,100 donors who previously made donations to WinRed, the primary Republican party donation platform, while \$1.4 million came from 1,700 donors who previously donated to ActBlue, the Democratic party equivalent to WinRed.

The gap widens when examining donors who specifically donated to Trump or Biden. More than 500 large Kennedy donors previously donated to Trump in the past two election cycles, more than three times the number who donated to Biden or 2016 Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

In this election cycle, only a handful of donors have given to both Kennedy and Biden while 160 of Kennedy's donors also gave to Trump this election cycle.

Both Trump and Kennedy have positioned themselves as outsiders who are willing to take on the establishment, which may explain why there is some crossover in their support. Republican 2024 contender Vivek Ramaswamy, who has likewise positioned himself as an outsider, also shares some donors with Kennedy.

Still, most of the large donors to the Kennedy campaign, 60%, have no previous donation history for either ActBlue or WinRed, showing that Kennedy may be exciting voters who previously felt left out of the recent political makeup of either party.

"No political party or candidate owns votes ... Kennedy welcomes everyone into his coalition no matter who they supported in the past," Kennedy campaign spokesperson Stefanie Spear said in a statement.

While donors make up a tiny fraction of total voters, they do tend to reflect the most active and passionate voters and can serve as a barometer of the direction of a party's voters. However,

Republicans have insisted they are not worried about Kennedy playing a potential spoiler role for the former president.

"Oftentimes people can donate to someone that they're not even voting for just to see their argument platforms," said Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL), a staunch Trump ally. "We've seen those calls among the sort of junior varsity slate of Republicans seeking the nomination, so I'm not as concerned about [donors]."

However, a [Quinnipiac University poll](#), released Wednesday, suggests that in a three-way race, Kennedy would pull significant numbers from both major candidates, with a slight lean towards taking more potential Trump voters.

According to the poll, Trump and Biden are virtually tied in a two-candidate race, with Biden polling 47% to Trump's 46%. However, when adding Kennedy to the race, he polled 22% while Trump dropped 10 points to 36% and Biden only dropped 8 points, to 39%. However, it is worth pointing out that the margin between the two candidates' drop, 2% is within the poll's margin of error of 2.4%.

As an aside, the 22% support for Kennedy would also put him over the threshold of 15% support in order to become eligible for the presidential debates. Kennedy will need to show that support in five "national public opinion polling organizations" and appear on enough state ballots to have a mathematical chance of winning the electoral college.

The last third-party candidate to appear on a debate stage with candidates from the two major political parties was in 1992, when Ross Perot participated as an independent.

If Kennedy is allowed to participate, he will be the first since the Commission on Presidential Debates raised the requirements for candidates to participate in 2000.

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FTX Founder Convicted on All Criminal Fraud Counts After Crypto Exchange's Collapse

Sam Bankman-Fried once ran the largest cryptocurrency exchange in the world, but his empire collapsed late last year after declaring bankruptcy, with later reports noting the platform owes its customers \$8.7 billion. The former CEO is potentially facing another trial over campaign contributions he made and alleged foreign bribery.

A US jury has found FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried guilty on all seven criminal fraud counts linked to the historic collapse of his cryptocurrency exchange platform.

He was found guilty of two counts of wire fraud, two counts of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit securities fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit commodities fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Bankman-Fried's mother Barbra Fried and his father, Joe Bankman, attended their son's trial. As US Marshalls led the former cryptocurrency exchange CEO out of the courtroom, Barbra Fried reportedly held her face in her hands and stifled a sob.

Bankman-Fried faces up to 110 years in prison if sentenced to the maximum amount for each charge. He was accused of using up to \$10 billion in customer funds to buy real estate, invest in other cryptocurrency companies, make political campaign contributions and pay back lenders of Alameda Research, a trading firm he also controlled.

Bankman-Fried is expected to appeal the result. Judge Lewis Kaplan, who presided over the case, has requested that the government inform him if Bankman-Fried will face a second charge of campaign finance violations and foreign bribery, saying that he wants a decision by February. A potential second trial could affect Bankman-Fried's sentencing date, which is currently set for March 28.

Bankman-Fried reported \$39.9 million in political contributions over 2021 and 2022. The FTX exchange declared bankruptcy in November 2022.

The prosecution painted Bankman-Fried as a liar, arguing he was motivated by greed. The prosecutor's witnesses, which included many former employees of FTX and friends of Bankman-Fried, backed up the claims.

Adam Yedidia, who worked as a developer for FTX, testified that Bankman-Fried had told him FTX and Alameda Research were on shaky ground after the price of cryptocurrency dropped. But the star witness proved to be Caroline Ellison, Bankman-Fried's former girlfriend, who testified Bankman-Fried directed or greenlit several instances of using FTX customer deposits to shore up Alameda Research. Ellison has pleaded guilty to fraud charges and has been cooperating with prosecutors.

Another significant witness testimony came from Gary Wang, FTX's co-founder. He testified Bankman-Fried directed him to implement features that would give Alameda an advantage over other traders on the FTX platform. Wang also pleaded guilty to fraud in the same case as Ellison.

The jury consisted of nine women and three men. The nearly monthlong trial included two weeks of testimony. The defense attempted to argue that many of the witnesses who took the stand were former employees who already pleaded guilty, therefore taking responsibility for their actions and off of Bankman-Fried, but the jury did not appear to buy it, convicting him on all accounts.

The former crypto-mogul took the uncommon approach of taking the stand during his trial, using the time to argue that he didn't intend to steal from or defraud anyone, but the move seemed to backfire as Bankman-Fried responded that he "couldn't recall" more than 140 times to questions from prosecutors.

Damian Williams, the top federal prosecutor in New York, said that though the cryptocurrency industry is new, the corruption put on display by Bankman-Fried "is as old as time."

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US Judge Hints at Possible Delay in Trump's Classified Documents Case

Despite facing numerous criminal and civil cases, former US President Donald Trump has proven to be the overwhelming favorite to clinch the Republican nomination for president in the upcoming 2024 election.

The Florida federal judge presiding over former US President Donald Trump's classified documents case hinted that she is open to a delay in the case, a move that prosecutors have been arguing against.

Judge Aileen Cannon set the trial's schedule in July, with a start date set for May 20. But at a hearing on Thursday, she floated the possibility of delaying portions of the pre-trial process, which could push back the actual trial date. It's believed it could be likely postponed until after the 2024 election, a result Trump's lawyers have been attempting to achieve.

"I'm just having a hard time seeing how realistically this work can be accomplished in this compressed period of time, given the realities that we're facing," Cannon said during the hearing.

Trump's lawyers argued they needed more time to prepare for the trial due to Trump's several other pending legal cases, two others of which are focused on alleged attempts to interfere in the 2020 presidential election. Officials have raised concerns that cases may potentially overlap and make it much more difficult for the Trump camp to properly handle the list of cases.

Cannon did not mention moving the trial date back, but any delay in the pre-trial process could cascade to the trial date, pushing that back as well.

"It's very difficult to be trying to work with a client in one trial and simultaneously try to prepare that client for another trial," Trump lawyer Chris Kise said. "This has been a struggle and a challenge."

Prosecutors working for special counsel Jack Smith, who is heading both the Jan. 6 and classified documents case, have argued against Cannon delaying the Florida case because the Washington, DC, case focusing on Trump's role in attempting to overturn the 2020 results may likewise be delayed.

"The court really cannot let and should not let the DC trial drive the schedule here," veteran Justice Department national security prosecutor Jay Bratt argued in front of Cannon. "We don't know what is going to happen in this case. We don't know what's going to happen in the DC case. That trial could disappear."

But Cannon noted she cannot predict what a different judge is going to do and does not want to put her trial on a track that could potentially interfere with another case.

The Florida judge added that she will set a new timeline for the case "as soon as possible."

Trump is accused of mishandling classified documents after leaving the White House in 2021, as well as trying to conceal the number of those documents from prosecutors. He has decried the trial and all of the legal cases filed against him as being part of political witch hunts.

In addition to the two federal cases, Trump is also facing an election-interference case at the state level in Georgia and a state-level case in New York centering around hush money payments made to adult film star Stormy Daniels. He and his company are also facing numerous civil suits.

If Trump is elected president, he will have no authority to shut down the state cases.

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Hunter Biden in Op-Ed Slams Republicans for 'Weaponizing' His Addiction

Hunter Biden, the son of US President Joe Biden, openly discussed his addiction issues after images and videos of him consuming what appears to be crack cocaine were leaked to the media.

In an [op-ed](#) published in a major US newspaper, Hunter Biden criticized Republicans for using his addiction issues in a "vile and sustained disinformation campaign" against his father, US President Joe Biden.

The president's son admitted in the opinion piece that during the throes of his addiction, he was drinking a bottle of vodka a day and taking "as many hits on a crack pipe as possible."

"My experience is not a unique one," Hunter Biden wrote. "At least 20 million Americans today suffer from substance abuse disorder. I don't know a family that hasn't been impacted in some way by addiction. What is distinct about my situation is that I'm the son of the president of the United States."

Hunter further complained about the coverage of him in conservative outlets like Fox News and the New York Post, which first published the contents of his now-infamous laptop.

The laptop contained images and videos of the president's son smoking what appears to be crack cocaine, including while in a drug rehab facility and while driving at high speeds.

It also contained documents and emails concerning foreign business deals, which have been the subject of an investigation by the House of Representatives and the Republican-headed impeachment inquiry of Joe Biden.

Hunter Biden went on to argue that the focus on his drug addiction could affect others who are struggling with addiction.

"What troubles me is the demonization of addiction, of human frailty, using me as its avatar and the devastating consequences it has for the millions struggling with addiction, desperate for a way out and being bombarded by the denigrating and near-constant coverage of me and my addiction," the first son wrote.

Hunter Biden appears to be referencing what the substance abuse care community calls "trigger events," which can cause relapses. The Gateway Foundation, a rehab center, lists 10 common triggers, including stress, illness, isolation and even positive events, like new jobs and promotions. It does not list seeing prominent people's drug use being exposed and discussed in the media as a common trigger.

Still, Hunter Biden argues the GOP's "weaponization of [his] addiction by partisan and craven factions represents a real threat to those desperate to get sober but are afraid of what may await them if they do."

"It is already a near-impossible decision for addicts to get sober, and the avalanche of negativity and assault of my personal privacy may only make it harder for those considering it," Hunter Biden wrote.

The younger Biden also criticized the criminal court case against him for lying on a gun application about his drug use and possessing a gun while addicted to drugs. Hunter stated in

the op-ed that the charges against him “appear to be the first-ever of their kind brought in the history of Delaware.” He [earlier](#) pleaded not guilty to the charges after a plea deal with prosecutors fell apart.

But, Hunter insisted he is taking responsibility for his actions. “I am not a victim. By any standard, I grew up with privilege and opportunity, and fully accept that the choices and mistakes I made are mine, and I am accountable for them and will continue to be,” he wrote. However, thanks in part to his father, many people struggling with addiction will not get the same chance to achieve sobriety. Joe Biden famously wrote the [1994 Crime Bill](#) that has been blamed for supercharging the mass incarceration of US citizens, particularly for drug use. But what is less known is that he also authored the [Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986](#) and its [1988 amendment](#). That law greatly increased the penalties for crack cocaine use, including a five-year mandatory minimum sentence for simple possession. It also disproportionately punished users of crack cocaine, the method of cocaine consumption preferred by Hunter Biden, compared to powdered cocaine.

Despite crack cocaine and cocaine containing the same psychoactive substance, the penalty for possessing crack cocaine was 100 times harsher than powdered cocaine under the law authored by Joe Biden, with 5 grams of crack cocaine resulting in the same mandatory minimum sentence as 500 grams of powdered cocaine.

Crack cocaine was more popular in the 1980s among urban neighborhoods and that sentencing disparity has been blamed for the disproportionate numbers of African Americans incarcerated for drug use. Joe Biden eventually admitted the disparity in sentencing was a mistake.

As of 2018, more than 300,000 Americans were incarcerated for drug-law violations, up from 25,000 in 1980. [Studies](#) have shown that increased imprisonment rates for drug-law violations do not result in lower drug use.

Hunter Biden concluded his op-ed by stating the effort of recovery should be celebrated and encouraged. “I hope that despite my role as the punchline and punching bag for some, others will also make the effort I have made, one day at a time, and get honest with themselves and the people who love and rely upon them,” he wrote.

The op-ed did not mention the incident that occurred in July when the Secret Service found a bag containing a small amount of cocaine inside the White House shortly after Hunter Biden and other members of the Biden family left the White House to vacation in Delaware.

The Secret Service closed its investigation into that incident without naming a suspect.

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Canada Regulator Halts Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Over Environmental Non-Compliance

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The Canada Energy Regulator (CER) has issued an order to halt work on the Trans Mountain oil pipeline expansion project in a wetland area near Abbotsford, British Columbia, until environmental non-compliances are corrected.

"During a compliance verification activity on the Trans Mountain Expansion Pipeline near

Abbotsford, Inspection Officers and Indigenous Monitors observed several non-compliances related to the environment and safety," CER said in the order released Thursday. "Some of these non-compliances include insufficient fencing to protect amphibians and unapproved vegetation clearing."

The safety and environment-related non-compliances must be investigated and corrected before the work can resume, the order added.

CER noted it would continue to follow up with Trans Mountain to ensure their compliance with the order, and verify their diligent mitigation of environmental hazards related to the expansion project.

"We will also continue to work with our Indigenous Advisory Monitoring Committee partners in oversight of Trans Mountain pipeline construction," CER said.

In 2018, the Canadian government bought the pipeline to ensure its expansion would go ahead. The cost has since grown fourfold to C\$30.9 billion (\$22.5 billion) notably due to the project's construction delays.

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US Sanctions Kosovo Official Nexhat Krasniqi Over Corruption – State Department

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The United States banned on Friday Nexhat Krasniqi, former director of the department of procurement at the Kosovo Ministry of Trade and Industry, from entering the country on the grounds of corruption, the State Department said in a press release.

"As a public official responsible for oversight of procurement contracts, Krasniqi abused his public position by accepting bribes in exchange for awarding a contract permitting the construction of an industrial park in the Drenas municipality by the operating company Eltoni," the release stated.

Krasniqi is being designated as "generally ineligible for entry" into the US.

The State Department also designated his children, Aulona Krasniqi and Olti Krasniqi.

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Police Investigate Attempted Break-In at South Carolina Nuclear Station – Sheriff's Office

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – Local police are investigating an apparent attempt on Thursday night to break into the Oconee Nuclear Station in South Carolina, according to a release.

"A white male driving a silver 2002 Toyota Camry drove through the exit side of the gate on the Highway 183 side of the facility," the release by the Oconee County Sheriff's Office stated. "After the vehicle struck the pop-up barricades that security at the plant activated, the driver backed

the vehicle up and proceeded down a dirt road, where Duke Energy security blocked the vehicle in."

The driver attempted to hit the security officers before driving through a fence and out of the plant's exit, where they attempted to hit a security truck. Returning to Highway 183, the driver went to Pickens County and pulled onto a property on Jones Mill Road, where shots were fired, the release added.

The sheriff's office said the source of the shots was unclear. It added that the Camry had an Arkansas tag of 380VDR and is appealing to the public for help.

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Chinese Jet Fires Flares in Front of Canadian Helicopter in South China Sea - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - A Chinese jet fired flares close to a Canadian military helicopter over international waters of the South China Sea last Sunday, a maneuver that Canada's military says was unsafe and unprofessional and could have caused the downing of the aircraft, CNN reported on Friday, citing a Canadian air officer.

The Sikorsky Cyclone helicopter was flying from the Royal Canadian Navy frigate HMCS Ottawa.

"The risk to a helicopter in that instance is the flares moving into the rotor blades or the engines so this was categorized as both unsafe and non-standard, unprofessional," Maj. Rob Millen, an air officer aboard HMCS Ottawa, told CNN.

The encounter was the second of two incidents the warship's helicopter had with the Chinese Navy's J-11 fighter jets over international waters on October 29, which saw the jets get as close as 100 feet from the helicopter, according to the officer.

Both incidents happened over international waters, not far from the Paracel Island chain. The Canadian helicopter was searching for a previously detected submarine when the encounters occurred, the report said.

The officer said this kind of action, taken by Chinese warplanes against a helicopter rather than a fixed-wing aircraft, was rare.

Millen also told the broadcaster that earlier the same day, Chinese J-11s intercepted his helicopter at close range while it flew straight and level at 3,000 feet above the water back toward the Ottawa, meaning it had no hostile intent.

"When the intercepting aircraft was closer and closer, at a certain point it became unsafe," he said.

Millen said his helicopter had experienced turbulence as a result, which posed a danger to the aircraft.

The officer said he had ended that encounter by descending to 200 feet, an area "very uncomfortable for fast air fighter jets."

The Canadian military's air crews train on how to respond to such encounters and will continue to fly over the international waters of the South China Sea, the Canadian air force major said.

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FEATURE - 'They Dreamed of Living in Peace': Gaza Teacher Mourns Students Killed by Israeli Strikes

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Several weeks ago, Ruwaida Amer, a science teacher in southern Gaza, was enjoying days helping young school children craft science projects, taking an occasional selfie in the playground with a few of her joyful students, but all those moments have turned into distant memories crumbling under another cycle of another war.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale terrorist attack against Israel that left over 1,400 dead. Israel since then has launched a massive campaign of retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides, but an overwhelming majority of those killed are Palestinian. Gaza's Health Ministry said over 9,000 have been killed in the strip since the operation began. UNICEF earlier this week said at least 3,500 children are among the dead.

"I have lost many of my students, three of them between ages 10 and 13 age," Amer, 32, told Sputnik. "I have learned that they were killed in the war as a result of the Israeli bombing on Gaza. These children dreamed of a different future. They dreamed of living in peace."

The children, Amer recalls, are terrified of the sounds of planes and missiles, something that has become all too familiar to them over the years.

Gaza residents have been living under a massive Israeli bombardment for nearly one month in the ongoing Gaza war. Israel aims to oust the Palestinian Hamas movement as a result of the attacks carried out on October 7, but the airstrikes seem to have had little effect as rocket fire continues towards Israel.

"Israel does not warn citizens before bombing homes, but it suddenly drops missiles on them while they are sleeping," Amer, who also lost her neighbors during the attacks, said. "The large number of martyrs are children, entire families were wiped out from the civil registry, while some families left one child alone, an orphan."

Amer said she specifically thinks about the fate of 7-year-old Odeh Abu Akar, who is now an orphan after an Israeli bomb hit his house, killing his entire immediate family members.

"Every day he misses his family and searches for his mother and father," Amer said. "He does not want to sleep or eat without his mother by his side, but his relatives try to console and support him."

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Israel has Gaza under a siege that has created a dire humanitarian crisis for the millions of Palestinians living in the enclave.

"There is no water, no electricity, no fuel, and no food. How can the citizens of Gaza live without these basic needs? It is an unjust and massive siege," Amer said. "Citizens are trying to get water for washing and using toilets. Israel has cut off water from Gaza."

Gaza residents, according to Amer, must rely on wells that are pumped for water once a week

to provide to the communities. The lack of electricity impedes the ability of medical providers in Gaza to care for the injured, Amer said.

"The power outage has led to a deterioration in the health sector," Amer said. "The European Gaza Hospital suffers from power outages that affect providing its health services inside the hospital. What may save the hospital is the availability of solar energy, which facilitates the work during the day, but at night it does not work."

Moreover, Amer mentioned that the two-day communications blackout on October 27 also added to the everyday struggle Gazans are facing in the war.

"The isolation from the world was also ugly, as if it was a deliberate plan to kill the Palestinians without being seen by the world. This is what the citizens of Gaza thought," Amer said. "That was a difficult moment."

Although thousands of Gaza residents were able to escape "destruction and death" after fleeing the northern Gaza Strip ahead of the Israeli invasion and intensified bombardment, they continue to face inhumane conditions, according to Amer.

One of them is Rawan Saed, 35, who recently fled from Gaza City to a school in Al-Fokhari School with her five children, Amer said.

Saed told Amer Israelis dropped leaflets in areas in northern Gaza warning people to evacuate to the city of Khan Yunis. Saed, along with her husband and children, fled to the city of Khan Yunis and settled at an UNRWA-run school. Residents in the area provided Saed and her family with mattresses and blankets they could use to sleep in a classroom.

Saed, as quoted by Amer, said:

"We cannot use the toilets adequately, I had not showered since the beginning of the war until now, and I feel mentally and physically very tired... My children cannot sleep because of the crowded place and the noise here. I try to provide food for them, but there is no way to cook here."

Saed also worries about the psychological trauma of her five children.

"All my children are young, the oldest one of them is 12 years old and they have involuntary urination due to the intense sounds of bombing and missiles," Saed said as quoted by Amer.

"They are afraid of any sound next to them. They do not like the night at all and cannot sleep during it. Two days ago, I left them to draw and then found them drawing the house and garden and dreaming of returning to their home."

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FEATURE - 'They Dreamed of Living in Peace': Gaza Teacher Mourns Students Killed by Israeli Strikes

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Преподаватель из сектора Газа об убитых учениках: "Они мечтали о мирной жизни"

ВАШИНГТОН, 3 ноя - РИА Новости. Обострение палестино-израильского конфликта и удары израильских войск по сектору Газа сильнее всего отразились на детях: многие погибли, другие остались полными сиротами, рассказала РИА Новости местная учительница Рувайда Амер, ученики которой оказались среди жертв.

"Я потеряла много воспитанников, троим из них было от 10 до 13 лет. Я узнала, что они были убиты во время израильских бомбежек по Газе. Эти дети мечтали о другой жизни, они мечтали жить в мире", - рассказала находящаяся в Газе 32-летняя Амер.

В районе, где живет собеседница агентства, среди развалин зданий и фрагментов бетонных конструкций повсюду попадаются детские вещи и игрушки.

РИА Новости удалось связаться с Рувайдой Амер по электронной почте. В своем письме женщина рассказала о том, что ее воспитанники напуганы звуками бомбежек и разрывающихся снарядов.

"Израиль не предупреждает людей об ударах, бомбы просто вдруг падают на дома, когда люди спят в них", - рассказала женщина, называя оказавшихся в центре горячего конфликта детей "мучениками".

"Большое количество мучеников - дети, целые семьи уничтожаются, иногда дети остаются полными сиротами", - рассказывает она, вспоминая 7-летнего Одея Абу Акара.

"Каждый день он ищет своих маму и отца, скучает по ним, он не ест и не спит без мамы,

но родные пытаются его успокоить", - пишет из горячей точки Амер.

Израиль 7 октября подвергся беспрецедентной по масштабу ракетной атаке из сектора Газа в рамках объявленной военным крылом палестинского движения ХАМАС операции "Потоп Аль-Аксы". После этого бойцы организации проникли в приграничные районы на юге Израиля, где открывали огонь как по военным, так и по гражданским, а также взяли более 200 заложников. В Израиле, по данным местных властей, погибли более 1,4 тысячи человек, в том числе 300 военных, пострадали более 5 тысяч.

В ответ армия обороны Израиля начала операцию "Железные мечи" против ХАМАС в секторе Газа. За несколько дней израильские военные взяли под контроль все населенные пункты у границы с Газой и начали наносить авиационные удары по объектам, в том числе гражданским, на территории сектора. Также Израиль объявил о полной блокаде сектора Газа: остановлена поставка воды, продуктов питания, электричества, медикаментов, топлива. Число жертв в секторе Газа превысило 9 тысяч человек, свыше 32 тысяч получили ранения.

Блокада Газы Израилем привела к тому, что в ситуации гуманитарной катастрофы оказались около двух миллионов живущих в секторе палестинцев.

"Здесь нет воды, электричества, топлива и еды. Как могут жители Газы жить без удовлетворения этих минимальных потребностей? Это несправедливая и массированная осада", - описывает ситуацию в своем письме Амер.

Она активно информирует о ситуации в регионе в социальной сети X, публикует репортажи в катарском издании Аль-Джазира. На его страницах она рассказывает, что люди в Газе лишены возможности соблюдать элементарную гигиену: женщины вынуждены применять медицинские препараты для задержки менструации, дети не имеют возможности пользоваться туалетом и душем.

Активистка рассказала, что колодезную воду жителям сектора удастся получить лишь раз в неделю, а в отсутствии электричества больницы едва способны оказывать квалифицированную медицинскую помощь. "Перебои электричества переживает Европейская больница в Газе, ее спасают солнечные батареи, но на ночь их не хватает", - пишет она.

Продолжавшаяся два дня интернет-блокада Газы, по словам Амер, была "тяжелым периодом". "Изоляция от мира была настолько ужасна, словно это был преднамеренный план убивать палестинцев так, чтобы мир не видел этого, именно так ощущали это жители Газы", - отмечает она.

Ранее постоянный представитель Палестины в Лиге Арабских государств Моханнад Аклук привел данные, согласно которым, по меньшей мере 1,4 миллиона палестинцев, проживавших на севере Газы, были вынуждены переселиться в южные районы сектора.

В их числе, рассказала Амер, ее знакомая Раван Саид, ее пятеро детей и муж. Они бежали из города Газа в Хан-Юнис, где смогли разместиться на территории одной из школ, однако в городе нет воды, негде готовить еду. "Я не мылась с самого начала войны, я истощена физически и психологически", - цитирует Амер свою знакомую Саид, старшему из детей которой всего 12.

Женщина рассказывает о тяжелой психической травме, нанесенной детям: они вздрагивают от малейших звуков, не спят по ночам.

"Два дня назад я предложила им порисовать - и увидела, что они рисуют дом с садом,

они мечтают вернуться домой", - рассказала женщина.

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Israel's Activities in Gaza Had Specific Elements of Genocide - Ex-UN Official

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - There were elements of genocide in Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, former director of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights Craig Mokhiber told Sputnik.

On Tuesday, a letter by Mokhiber to Volker Turk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, was made public, which explained that the UN high-ranking diplomat resigned over the organization's stance on the war between Israel and Hamas. Mokhiber stopped working at the organization on November 1.

Mokhiber pointed out that following the escalation in October, the world has been witnessing "the wholesale slaughter of Palestinian civilians in Gaza", while the United Nations has totally failed to respond effectively to the situation and noted that a humanitarian ceasefire was blocked by the United States in the Security Council.

"I think [there has been a] very inadequate public response of the political side of the UN to what I have said as a human rights lawyer, looks like a case of genocide. And I don't use that word lightly. Because, you know, genocide is defined by the UN Convention Against Genocide " Mokhiber said. "It sets out a definition and the specific elements of genocide, which I believe have been manifest in the Israeli response in Gaza."

Commenting on his decision to resign, Mokhiber stressed that his criticism wasn't of the overall UN - he was always very proud of heroic work by the humanitarian workers in Palestine, the human rights monitors in Palestine, the independent UN Human Rights mechanisms have been absolutely heroic - but he criticized that these workers "have been abandoned by the political side of the UN."

For the past 30 years, the UN "has grown increasingly weak in its approach to the Middle East," he explained. "It has dropped its emphasis of international human rights law and international humanitarian law and the UN Charter, and instead has moved into this very amorphous political approach that defers to Israel as the occupying power, defers to Western states that are allied with Israel."

Therefore, he went on to say, there has been the continuous worsening of the situation in Israel and Palestine, especially over the course of the last 30 years.

"In March. when there were a series of atrocities happening on the West Bank, and I felt that our response was too quiet. I made a series of public statements about the situation," he shared. "That brought a blow-back and not just from Israel lobby organizations that were trying to silence me, but even from inside the UN itself. So, I wrote to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, I expressed my concern for these trepidatious approaches by the UN and the need to speak more boldly based upon human rights and humanitarian law. And I indicated that I would be leaving the organization after 32 years in the coming months."

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the

Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel announced it is expanding ground operations in Gaza to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages.

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US as Party to Gaza Conflict Backing Israel Can Have No Role in Mediation - Ex-UN Official

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United States is not a mediator in the Middle East crisis but a party to the conflict on the side of Israel and should play no role in mediation efforts, the former Director of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, Craig Mokhiber, told Sputnik.

On Tuesday, the letter by Mokhiber to Volker Turk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, was made public, which explained that the UN high-ranking diplomat resigned over the Organization's stance on the war between Israel and Hamas. Mokhiber stopped working at the Organization on November 1.

Mokhiber noted that if all of the UN specialists and experts recognize that the quartet is not a credible or effective institution, and believes that it must be recognized by the members of the Quartet itself.

"Part of the problem is that for years you had the United States and Europe put out as mediators in the conflict. And that has always been a gross misrepresentation, we have to recognize, for example, that the United States is a party to the conflict on the side of Israel," Mokhiber said.

The former UN official pointed out that the United States is providing billions of dollars in military aid, as well as there is intelligence cooperation.

"That provides diplomatic cover, including in the Security Council to prevent any action to hold Israel accountable," he said. "It's just an illusion to suggest that they can play any other role." Mokhiber went on to say that that applies to Europe as well.

"As we've seen in the recent onslaught in Gaza, instead of seeing European leaders standing up, including the leaders of the United Kingdom, and of the European Union, standing up to defend human rights, we've seen them stand up to defend the aggression, the gross violations and the breaches of humanitarian law that Israel has been committing in the occupied territories," he said. "These institutions are not the solution, they are the problem, we need to return to a law based institution that says that all people of Israel and Palestine have equal rights."

But, he added, they need to be protected by international human rights and humanitarian law. "We need to work for accountability for all perpetrators, redress for all victims, and end to apartheid and an end to the occupation," he said.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli

communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

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'Great Mistake' For US to Increase Engagement in Israel-Hamas War- Ex-Senior UN Official

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - It would be a big mistake for the United States to increase its engagement in the war between Hamas and Israel, Former director of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights Craig Mokhiber told Sputnik

On Tuesday, the letter by Mokhiber to Volker Turk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, was made public, which explained that the UN high-ranking diplomat resigned over the Organization's stance on the war between Israel and Hamas. Mokhiber stopped working at the Organization on November 1.

Mokhiber has warned of a high risk for the Middle East war to become a wider conflict.

"I think it is increasing with every passing day. I think the US engagement has not been helpful in this regard," Mokhiber said. "Obviously, I think it would be a terrible mistake for the US to increase its involvement, it should be decreasing its involvement here and using its influence, to get a full ceasefire and humanitarian aid into Gaza and the reconstruction of Gaza and end to the occupation and the realization of the human rights of the Palestinian people."

The former UN official believes that Israel cannot end the conflict, cannot end armed resistance.

"By doing that. In fact, it will produce more armed resistance," he explained. "Hamas grew out of Gaza because of the occupation. You can kill every Hamas leader and fighter. But all of these children who are growing up under these horrific conditions now they will grow up wanting to resist as well."

"So if the objective is peace, if the objective is an end to the conflict, if the objective is an end to armed resistance, the answer is an end to the occupation and the establishment of a political regime across all of Historic Palestine and Israel, based on international human rights, democracy and equal rights for Christians, Muslims and Jews without exception," he concluded.

On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue hostages. The conflict escalation has resulted in the deaths of around 1,400 people in Israel and over 8,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Ex-Senior UN Official Says Got Online Threats From Pro-Israeli Networks, Troll Farms

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Former director of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights Craig Mokhiber told Sputnik that he has been subjected to all sorts of attacks online, including receiving death threats from pro-Israel networks and online troll factories.

On Tuesday, the letter by Mokhiber to Volker Turk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, was made public, which explained that the UN high-ranking diplomat resigned over the Organization's stance on the war between Israel and Hamas. Mokhiber stopped working at the Organization on November 1.

Mokhiber noted that while the crackdown on human rights defenders does not come from the United Nations, there is still this pressure to be silent.

"I was pressured to be silent, which is one of the reasons I decided to leave," he said. "But the real crackdown is coming from a network of organizations that have been set up to defend Israeli impunity. I can just tell you, when my letter was leaked, I received all kinds of online attacks, including death threats, from these pro Israel networks and online troll farms and so on. It's part and parcel of the business."

The former UN official gave an example for criticizing Israeli human rights violations, one is now called an anti Semite.

"Even if you've worked your whole life fighting bigotry, including anti semitism, they'll say you're an anti Semite," he said. "This is a part of the tactic that they use. It doesn't work so much anymore, but it does affect people, you know, and we have to repeatedly make the point that criticism of Israeli human rights violations is not anti-semitism, just like criticism of Saudi violations is not Islamophobic... But they still use that as a smear tactic against human rights defenders."

Moreover, Mokhiber said, the problem is they're now using legal mechanisms.

"I'm stationed in the United States right now. And in the US, you have the federal government, you have state governments, you have local governments, and you have universities, who are using the legal mechanisms to punish people who try to speak out against the human rights violations Israel is committing," he noted. "You can be kicked out of school, you can be punished inside universities, you could lose a job or a contract. And this is being actively pursued."

"Again, I'm in the West. I don't know what's happening in other regions at the moment, but it's being actively pursued not just in the US, but in large parts of Europe as well," he added. "This is in violation of the international human rights guarantees of free speech, free expression, free association, freedom of information, and is quite horrendous. I have not seen this kind of crackdown in the West, certainly since the Cold War."

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

On October 27, Israel announced it is expanding ground operations in Gaza to eliminate

Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages.

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US, Israel Will Try To Block Probe Into Use Of White Phosphorus by Israel - Ex-UN Official

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United States and Israel will try to block a possible future investigation into the alleged use of white phosphorus by Israel, Former director of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights Craig Mokhiber told Sputnik

On Tuesday, the letter by Mokhiber to Volker Turk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, was made public, which explained that the UN high-ranking diplomat resigned over the Organization's stance on the war between Israel and Hamas. Mokhiber stopped working at the Organization on November 1.

Mokhiber noted that successive UN investigations in the past, in prior attacks by Israel, have confirmed the use of white phosphorus.

"In the current round, I'm not sure what information is available. I can tell you that this is being raised by the Independent Human Rights mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council," he said. "I think we can fully expect that there will be a full investigation, independent international investigation, you can also expect as in all previous investigations, that Israel will not cooperate with that investigation, and will try to block it. You can also expect that powerful western states, especially the United States, will try to block it from taking place as they have done in our previous investigations."

"So there will be an investigation, they will confirm what exactly has happened. But there won't be any accountability, because Israel and those who committed individuals who commit these kinds of war crimes will be protected, including by the United States and the Security Council," he concluded.

A number of NGOs, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty international, claimed that Israel used white phosphorus in military operations in Gaza and Lebanon.

The use of incendiary weapons, such as napalm or white phosphorus, is banned under Protocol III to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects of 1980, according to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on October 11 that the UN was not aware of any reports of white phosphorus munitions being used by the Israeli military in Gaza.

Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Lior Haiat slammed Amnesty International on October 26 as anti-Semitic and biased against Israel after the organization accused both sides in the conflict of war crimes.

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Everyone in UN Knows 'Two-State Solution' No Longer Possibility in Conflict - Ex Official

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Everyone in the corridors of the United Nations knows that there is no longer a possibility to solve the Middle East conflict on the basis of the two-state solution, former director of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights Craig Mokhiber told Sputnik.

On Tuesday, the letter by Mokhiber to Volker Turk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, was made public, which explained that the UN high-ranking diplomat resigned over the Organization's stance on the war between Israel and Hamas. Mokhiber stopped working at the Organization on November 1.

"You know, in the UN, you have this kind of a smokescreen. Everyone in the corridors knows that there is no longer a possibility of a sustainable two state solution," Mokhiber said. "Yet, if they speak in public or to journalists, they just keep repeating the mantra of the two state solution. Everyone in the UN knows that the Quartet had effectively not existed and yet they refer to the Quartet."

The former UN official went on to say that everyone in the United Nations knows that this is not just a conflict between two parties fighting over land or religion.

"But it is a conflict between occupier and occupied between oppressor and oppressed. And between one of the most powerful states and militaries in the world on the one hand, and dispossessed and disempowered, civilian indigenous population on the other hand," he said.

Moreover, Mokhiber went on to say, all of the international human rights organizations have recognized the project of Israel is a system of apartheid, and yet, this is not a word that one is hearing uttered by the political side of the Organization.

"This has been affirmed by every international human rights organization, Israeli human rights organizations, Palestinian human rights organizations, and by a number of UN Human Rights mechanisms. And yet in the approach of the United Nations, the political side of the United Nations, all of this is ignored," he said.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

On October 27, Israel announced it is expanding ground operations in Gaza to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages.

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Israel's Activities in Gaza Had Specific Elements of Genocide - Ex-UN Official

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - There were elements of genocide in Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, former director of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights Craig Mokhiber told Sputnik.

On Tuesday, a letter by Mokhiber to Volker Turk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, was

made public, which explained that the UN high-ranking diplomat resigned over the organization's stance on the war between Israel and Hamas. Mokhiber stopped working at the organization on November 1.

Mokhiber pointed out that following the escalation in October, the world has been witnessing "the wholesale slaughter of Palestinian civilians in Gaza", while the United Nations has totally failed to respond effectively to the situation and noted that a humanitarian ceasefire was blocked by the United States in the Security Council.

"I think [there has been a] very inadequate public response of the political side of the UN to what I have said as a human rights lawyer, looks like a case of genocide. And I don't use that word lightly. Because, you know, genocide is defined by the UN Convention Against Genocide " Mokhiber said. "It sets out a definition and the specific elements of genocide, which I believe have been manifest in the Israeli response in Gaza."

Commenting on his decision to resign, Mokhiber stressed that his criticism wasn't of the overall UN - he was always very proud of heroic work by the humanitarian workers in Palestine, the human rights monitors in Palestine, the independent UN Human Rights mechanisms have been absolutely heroic - but he criticized that these workers "have been abandoned by the political side of the UN."

For the past 30 years, the UN "has grown increasingly weak in its approach to the Middle East," he explained. "It has dropped its emphasis of international human rights law and international humanitarian law and the UN Charter, and instead has moved into this very amorphous political approach that defers to Israel as the occupying power, defers to Western states that are allied with Israel."

Therefore, he went on to say, there has been the continuous worsening of the situation in Israel and Palestine, especially over the course of the last 30 years.

"In March, when there were a series of atrocities happening on the West Bank, and I felt that our response was too quiet. I made a series of public statements about the situation," he shared. "That brought a blow-back and not just from Israel lobby organizations that were trying to silence me, but even from inside the UN itself. So, I wrote to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, I expressed my concern for these trepidatious approaches by the UN and the need to speak more boldly based upon human rights and humanitarian law. And I indicated that I would be leaving the organization after 32 years in the coming months."

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel announced it is expanding ground operations in Gaza to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages.

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Doctors in Gaza Face Shortages of Everything, Operate Without Anesthesia - US Doctor

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Doctors in the Gaza Strip are struggling with shortages of everything and have to operate without anesthesia, renowned US doctor Bill Novick told Sputnik.

Novick is a prominent pediatric cardiologist who has operated on children with severe cardiac issues all over the world, including in conflict zones. He worked in the West Bank and Gaza in the 2000s and has since maintained contacts with his colleagues there.

"Doctors in Gaza face shortages of everything: critical items, routine items, anesthesia, medications, bandages. It is terrible," he said.

Novick, who is planning to perform surgeries in other parts of the Middle East later in November, said he receives first-hand information from American doctor Steve Sosebee, president of charity Palestinian Children's Relief Fund (PCRF).

"Steve's Gaza team is there, and Steve is still in the West Bank. I am in communication with him, not so much because all the cell towers are going down. Nobody from PCRF has died yet. They are supplying what they can, the children and the families," Novick said.

He stressed that it is very difficult to treat patients, particularly children, in Gaza, where hospitals are running out of gas, medical supplies and anesthesia.

"They are running out of medical supplies, anesthesia, they are operating on people with very little amounts of anesthesia, some of which is sedation," he added.

The US doctor said that the current situation looks more difficult than in 2000 when he worked in the West Bank and Gaza in the beginning of the Second Intifada.

"There is no comparison, the Israelis were not bombing Gaza at the time, all this stuff was mostly happening in the West Bank, and we saw a fair amount of it," he said.

Novick called Hamas "vicious monsters" and "evil" but also pointed to the "horrors" that Gazans are going through because the Israelis are bombing "everything that they think contains Hamas." He also expressed belief that the Israeli government made a "tactical error" by cutting hospitals and other civilian infrastructure off from water, fuel, and other critical items.

"I can understand the reaction by the state of Israel. But it should not be against all Palestinians, it should be against Hamas," Novick said.

On October 7, Hamas carried out a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and later began ground operations in Gaza. It also ordered a complete blockade of the exclave, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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US Cardiologists Operate on 5-Day-Old Baby, 'Miracle' Patient in Ukraine - Team Leader

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - An international group of cardiologists from the US-based Cardinal Alliance held successful operations on a 5-day-old baby and an adult patient with significant heart problems during the recent trip to Lviv, Ukraine, the team leader Bill Novick

told Sputnik.

"We did three newborns from 5 up to 27 days of age, four children of ages between 11 months and 17 years, and we did one 37-year-old woman," Novick said about the outcome of the two-week trip.

All patients were responding well to the treatment, he added.

A 5-day-old baby weighed only 3 kilos and had coarctation of the aorta and hypoplastic, a condition when patients are struggling with significant blood pressure in upper extremities.

"Instead of having normal blood pressure of 65 or 70 systolic in the upper extremities, this baby's blood pressure was 100. For a 5-day-old - oh my God! That is unbelievably high!" Novick said.

However, he pointed out that the operation was not complicated, and the baby did great with that.

When asked if this patient was one of the youngest Novick operated on, the doctor recalled that he had a 4-hour-old patient in Peru many years ago.

"We have done a number of children who were less than 24-hours-old," he added.

In Ukraine, the visiting team also operated on a 37-year-old woman with a serious diagnosis called a transposition of the great arteries (TGA) with ventricular septum.

"She has natural left pulmonary artery stenosis. The pressure on the left lung suggested that we could do a complete repair, but the pressure on the right lung was the same as her normal blood pressure, so way too high. We were able to reduce the pressures to almost normal for the pulmonary artery," the doctor said.

Before the procedure, this woman's regular saturation might drop to 50%, which is half of the norm. However, the Cardiac Alliance team was able to increase it to 80% using pulmonary vasodilator medicine. The patient responded very well to the treatment, the doctor said.

Novick, who is calling "miracle patients" people with the most severe heart issues whom he was able to return to normal life, said that this lady has a chance to be included in the list.

"She is not a miracle yet, but we will see how she looks during our next trip to Lviv in December, and maybe we will have a miracle report on this woman in March," he said.

During the trip, doctors also installed special cardiac devices on another six patients and checked four children with severe pulmonary hypertension caused by uncorrected heart defects for possible operations in 2024, Novick added.

The Cardiac Alliance, which consists of medical professionals from different countries, established a pediatric heart surgery project in Lviv in 2021, given that there was no such program in the western part of Ukraine at that time, and children had to travel to Kiev and other cities to receive relevant treatment.

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Russia Accuses US of Disrupting Resolution on Nazi Glorification - Lukyantsev

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - Russia accuses the US of persisting in their endeavors to impede the acceptance of the Russian resolution aimed at combating the

glorification of Nazism, the director of the Department for Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights at the Russian Foreign Ministry Grigory Lukyantsev said.

"The US delegation is not giving up their attempts to disrupt the adoption of our document. They made an amendment. This is nothing more than a procedural provocation. This is not essentially an amendment that would improve the project. This is just some kind of text that is being thrown at us so that we ourselves abandon our resolution," Lukyantsev told journalists on Wednesday.

According to the draft resolution presented by Russia, countries are urged to take concrete actions, including legal and educational measures, to prevent the distortion of World War II history and the denial of war crimes.

The document also condemns incidents promoting Nazism, such as graffiti on war monuments, and calls for the elimination of racial discrimination and the prohibition of materials and rhetoric promoting hatred and violence based on ethnicity, nationality, religion, or belief.

However, Lukyantsev revealed that several delegations had conveyed that the US had approached them to promote their proposed amendment.

"Some delegations don't call this an amendment, but a political manoeuvre, since the US representatives vote against the resolution if the amendment is adopted or not," Lukyantsev added.

Moreover, in 2022, the US employed a similar tactic, yet the resolution was adopted.

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FTX Founder Bankman-Friedman Found Guilty on All 7 Counts of Criminal Fraud - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - A US jury convicted FTX Founder Sam Bankman-Friedman on all seven charges related to criminal fraud, CNBC reported.

Bankman-Fried faced seven criminal counts, including wire fraud, securities fraud and money laundering. Federal prosecutors allege that Bankman-Fried defrauded FTX customers from the time the company started in 2019 until its bankruptcy. If convicted, he could land in prison for life.

FTX, the Bahamas-based cryptocurrency exchange co-founded by Bankman-Fried and Gary Wang in 2019, had become one of the largest cryptocurrency exchanges in the world. The company boasted over one million customers and was valued at \$32 billion in January 2022.

In November 2022 several newspapers alleged that FTX was a financial bubble, triggering an outbreak of withdrawals. Amid the company's liquidity crisis, the media reports also drew the attention of US regulators to FTX. Investigators have since asserted that Bankman-Fried and his subordinates misled investors for years, using billions of clients' dollars to make risky bets at Alameda hedge fund, along with sinking them into personal expenses. On November 11, 2022, FTX and over a hundred of its affiliates filed for bankruptcy in Delaware. After FTX's collapse, an estimated one million customers were left facing billions of dollars in losses.

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UAW Reaches Historic General Wage Increases for Stellantis Workers - Vice President

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - United Auto Workers (UAW) Vice President Rich Boyer announced that for the first time in history, the salary bargaining unit of Stellantis workers will receive significant wage increases.

"For the first time in Stellantis history. We have won matching general wage increases for our salary bargaining unit. They [employees] will also receive a total of 25% in wage increases over the life of this contract," Boyer said on Thursday during the UAW Stellantis Tentative Agreement Highlights.

Furthermore, Boyer said that they had also secured cost of living adjustments (COLA) for both salary and hourly workers, emphasizing that this would guarantee that their wages remained in step with inflation.

"By the end of our agreement, we estimate that our starting wage for production workers will increase by about 67%... Similar, we estimate that our top wage will increase by about 33%," Boyer added.

Since September 15, approximately 45,000 American automotive employees at different facilities of Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis have engaged in strikes following unfruitful discussions, as the UAW pursues a 46% salary increase and a 32-hour working week, along with additional conditions.

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US to Announce \$425Mln Ukraine Aid Package on Friday - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United States will announce a new \$425 million military assistance package for Ukraine as soon as Friday, Reuters reported citing US officials.

The report said on Thursday that the package will include \$300 million worth of laser-guided munitions to counter drones that will be acquired over time through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative rather than drawing down from US weapon stockpiles.

The aid package will also have additional NASAMS, HIMARS, and artillery munitions, the report said, adding that no additional ATACMS missiles are expected to be included.

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UN Chief Says Concentration of AI in Few Countries Can Increase Geopolitical Tensions

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said the concentration of AI in a few states could contribute to geopolitical tensions.

"The concentration of AI in a few countries and companies could increase geopolitical tensions," Guterres said at the UK Summit on AI Safety Thursday.

At the moment, a big part of advanced AI chips are produced in one of the most 'geopolitically sensitive places on earth', he added.

The United Nations is expanding its AI focus, realizing that they have to establish a strong presence right from the beginning.

Big names are increasingly advocating for a safe approach to AI. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is to meet with US billionaire Elon Musk on Thursday following the AI Safety Summit held in the UK city of Milton Keynes. Elon Musk. Sunak and Musk are expected to hold a live conversation on the billionaire's social network X.

The AI Safety Summit is being held from November 1-2 and brings together international government leaders, major AI companies, civil society groups and experts in the field.

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UN Chief Says AI Risks Vary, Will Demand New Solutions

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said AI risks vary and will demand new ways to tackle them.

"AI-associated risks are many and varied. Like AI itself, they are still emerging, and they demand new solutions," Guterres said at the UK Summit on AI Safety Thursday.

The United Nations is expanding its AI focus, realizing that they have to establish a strong presence right from the beginning.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is to meet with US billionaire Elon Musk on Thursday following the AI Safety Summit held in the UK city of Milton Keynes. Elon Musk. Sunak and Musk are expected to hold a live conversation on the billionaire's social network X.

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Biden Administration Considering Sanctions Relief for Cuba - Chilean President

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is having internal debates about possibly lifting sanctions on Cuba, Chilean President Gabriel Boric told reporters according to the White House press pool.

"Given the difficult situation that the Cuban people are going through. It is imperative to lift the sanctions on Cuba and remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. We firmly

believe that it is not," Boric said as quoted by the press pool on Thursday. "They [United States] are in a process of debate about it, and we understand that this issue ignites strong emotions in the United States. However, we must consider that these sanctions are not targeting just a government; they are affecting a whole population."

Boric made his remarks after a bilateral meeting with President Joe Biden at the White House. According to the press pool, Boric also discussed with Biden the situation in Venezuela, including matters related to the lifting of sanctions and energy investments.

The Chilean president conveyed to Biden his desire to continue collaborating with other Latin American countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia to ensure that the elections in Venezuela next year "have all the necessary guarantees."

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Russia to Withstand Growing Sanctions Pressure Ahead of March Elections – Amb. Antonov

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – Russia is ready and will withstand the growing pressure of sanctions on its economy and political system ahead of the upcoming presidential elections in March, Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov told reporters.

"We see a frontal attack on Russia from politics and economics to human rights issues. In fact, absolutely everywhere there is an attempt to hinder the development of our country, to prevent the growth of the well-being of ordinary people," Antonov said on Thursday. "With a high degree of confidence, we can assume that US pressure will increase as our society moves towards an important political event - the presidential elections in March."

According to Antonov, Russia's opponents have exhausted the possibilities of sanction pressure, while the latest steps of the White House look wanton, illogical, and cannot be explained by common sense.

On Thursday, the United States imposed new Russia-related sanctions on 37 individuals and 192 entities for their alleged role in "harmful activities" of the Russian government.

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US House Passes \$14.3B In Israel Aid Bill Unlikely to Clear Senate, Biden Veto Threat

(Update: adds details in paras 4-7)

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed a \$14.3 billion security aid bill for Israel on Thursday, despite facing both an uphill battle in the Senate and a veto threat from the White House.

House lawmakers passed the Israel Security Supplemental Appropriations Act in a vote of 226-196, mostly along partisan lines. The bill separated the \$14.3 billion in emergency aid for Israel from the Biden administration's larger \$106 billion supplemental funding request, which

also included aid for Ukraine.

The legislation now heads to the Senate, where Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has been a vocal critic of the bill. Additionally, US President Joe Biden has also issued a veto threat for the bill should it clear both chambers of Congress.

The bill would attempt to offset the emergency aid by rescinding funds from the Internal Revenue Service. However, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the bill could add nearly \$12.5 billion to the deficit over the next decade.

The legislation is full of “poison pills” that benefit tax cheats, Schumer said. Schumer also criticized the bill for not including Ukraine aid or humanitarian aid for Gaza.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has said that he is “conceptually” in the same place as Schumer. Both Senate leaders view the conflicts in Israel and Ukraine as connected, McConnell said.

The Senate will develop a package that includes aid for both Israel and Ukraine, Schumer said on Thursday.

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US Senator Calls Israeli Strikes Disproportionate, Civilian Death Toll Unacceptable

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – US senator Chris Murphy said in a statement that Israeli strikes in Gaza are disproportionate and the current death toll among civilians in the enclave is “unacceptable and unsustainable.”

“[T]he way in which the current campaign is being waged — most recently evidenced by the terribly high human cost of the strikes on the Jabalya refugee camp — suggests that they have not struck the right balance between military necessity and proportionality,” the statement said

on Thursday. "The current rate of civilian death inside Gaza is unacceptable and unsustainable."

In his statement, Murphy called on the Israeli leadership to reconsider its approach and shift to a "more deliberate and proportionate counterterrorism campaign." He proposes to surgically target Hamas and Islamic Jihad and their infrastructure while prioritizing the safety of civilians.

At the same time, Murphy stressed that his statement should be considered as a call upon Israel to stop fighting Hamas.

On Tuesday, the Israeli military said it had hit the Jabalia camp in the Gaza Strip, adding that the death of civilians was a consequence of the "tragedy of war." The Gaza Interior Ministry said that at least 400 people had been killed or injured after Israeli air attacks against the refugee camp. On Wednesday, Israel launched another air attack against the camp, killing dozens more people, Palestinian news agency WAFA reported.

On October 7, the Palestinian movement Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the deaths of around 1,400 people in Israel and over 8,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) –
MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

- * Israel's operation on encircling Gaza City has been completed, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman Daniel Hagari said.

- * More than 400 people left the Gaza Strip and entered Egypt via the Rafah checkpoint, among them 30 injured persons, Wael Abu Omar, the spokesman for the checkpoint from the Palestinian side, told Sputnik.

- * The United States was able to evacuate 74 dual US-Israeli citizens from Israel on Thursday, US President Joe Biden told reporters according to the White House press pool.

- * Israeli aircraft on Thursday struck Hezbollah military infrastructure in Lebanon, including control centers and rocket launching posts, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said.

- * Israel shelled a hospital in the Gaza Strip, one child and one man were injured, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said.

SITUATION IN SYRIA

- * The Nusra Front (banned in Russia) is preparing to attack civilian infrastructure in the Syrian provinces of Hama and Aleppo using drones and the multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), Vadim Kulit, the deputy head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in Syria, said on Thursday.

- * US forces in Iraq and Syria have been attacked a total of 28 times since October 17, including

eight attacks since October 26, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said.

SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

* The United States has sanctioned Russian deputy ministers of industry, digital development and energy as well as several senior officials with the ministries of economic development and emergencies, the State Department said on Thursday.

* The United States has imposed sanctions on companies supplying dual-use microelectronics and other technology to Russia's defense industry, the State Department said.

* The United States on Thursday imposed sanctions on the creator and designer of Russia's Lancet suicide drones, Aleksandr Zakharov.

* The United States has imposed new Russia-related sanctions on 37 individuals and 192 entities for their alleged role in "harmful activities" of the Russian government, the US Department of the Treasury said.

* The US Commerce Department on Thursday added 13 entities in Russia and Uzbekistan to its export control list.

RUSSIA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM CTBT

* Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed the bill to revoke the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), according to the relevant document published on the official legal information portal on Thursday.

* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed his concerns regarding Russia's withdrawal from the CTBT and it unfortunately represented a significant step in the wrong direction.

* The United States remains committed to achieving the enforcement of the CTBT despite Russia's planned withdrawal from ratification of the agreement, Blinken said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Kiev has made a provocation to create a threat of a man-made disaster at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (NPP) and disrupt the rotation of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) staff, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Thursday.

* Russia repelled an attack and Ukraine has lost up to 115 soldiers in the Donetsk direction in the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* The words of Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi about an impasse on the battlefield are not true, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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US Speaker Johnson Says American People Deserve 'Sober Look' on Ukraine, Borders

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - New US Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson said on Thursday that the American citizens deserve a clearer picture of what is going on with Ukraine and the border before approving new funds.

"They [American people] deserve a more sober look at each of these issues. So we are going to handle the Ukraine issue and the border issue probably together on... the house side," Johnson told Fox News. "We are going to do these separately so we can have thoughtful

debate and discussion."

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US House Speaker Johnson Says Had Cordial Conversation With Biden, Leaders Split on Policy

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Thursday that his introductory talk with US President Joe Biden after winning the House leadership position was cordial, but that the two leaders are divided on policy matters.

"We had a cordial, kind of a meet-and-greet conversation," Johnson said during an interview with Fox Business. "It was a pleasant conversation. He knows that we're on very different planets with regard to policy and our positions and all of that."

However, Johnson and Biden agreed to a "stalemate" for the purposes of their conversation, Johnson added.

Johnson later met with other White House officials including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to discuss issues including aid for Israel and Ukraine, Johnson said.

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US Speaker Johnson is Greatly Concerned With How Biden Leads US

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - New US Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson said on Thursday that he is worried about how US President Joe Biden is leading the country.

"I have great concern with how he [Biden] is leading the country and I would be hard pressed to tell you one policy issue that I think they have handled well," Johnson told Kudlow during an interview on Fox Business.

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Biden to Continue Demand Congress to Ban Assault Weapons While in Maine – White House

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – During his visit to Maine on Friday US President Joe Biden will reiterate his demand for Congress to ban assault weapons and introduce universal background checks, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Thursday.

"While Friday will be a solemn day and a time for the President to be with Americans who are in mourning, he will also continue to demand that Congress act. They must pass an assault

weapon ban and they must enact universal background checks; they must help states across the country, adopt and strengthen red flag laws," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

President Joe Biden and the First Lady are scheduled to visit Lewiston, Maine on Friday, in response to a recent shooting that claimed the lives of 18 individuals and left countless persons injured.

Last week, 40-year-old Robert Card attacked a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston, Maine. Eighteen people have been reported killed in the attack and numerous others injured.

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Death of Journalist Zhuravlev Still Causes Pain For His Family, Friends - PGA Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - The death of RIA Novosti correspondent Rostislav Zhuravlev still causes pain for his family and friends, Monica Grayley, spokesperson to the UN General Assembly President (PGA), told reporters, expressing condolences to the reporter's relatives.

The second of November is the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. A cluster munition is reportedly the cause of this death but until now they have still not been brought to justice.

"First of all, we want to extend the condolences to the family and the friends of this journalist. I think his death still causes pain to his family and his friends. So... I would like to extend the President of the General Assembly's condolences to his family," Grayley, the spokesperson for the UN General Assembly president, Dennis Francis, said.

Journalists should not be arrested or killed just because they are doing their job, she added.

"They are the eyes, they are the ears, they are the voice of the entire society," she continued.

As Grayley pointed out, most of these cases, unfortunately, remain uninvestigated.

"Only 14% are resolved. This means that 86% of killings of journalists remain uninvestigated. This has to stop," she emphasized.

In turn, the Spokesman of the UN Secretary General, Stephane Dujarric, when asked to comment on the situation with the lack of those brought to justice for the murder of Zhuravlev, responded that: "Very often, cases are never investigated."

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Pentagon Says US Wants Israel to Follow Law of War, Separate Civilians From Hamas

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States wants Israel to abide by the law of war and take efforts to separate civilians in Gaza from Hamas militants, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Thursday.

"We're having conversations with [Israel] about the importance of taking the law of war into

account," Ryder said during a press briefing. "We want them to distinguish between terrorists and civilians."

The US will continue to have conversations with Israel on the matter, Ryder said. However, Israel is ultimately responsible for planning and conducting its operations, Ryder added.

The US believes that Israel is taking the law of war "into account," Ryder said.

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Lawmaker Fails to Table Motion Probing Canada's Turbine Sanction Waiver to Siemens

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – Canadian Conservative lawmaker Garnett Genuis failed on Thursday to reach unanimous consent at the House of Commons (HoC) in tabling a motion questioning Ottawa's decision to give Siemens a sanction waiver for its Nord Stream 1 turbines.

"I would request the unanimous consent of the House to table the special permit given by this government to Siemens to get around sanctions, that this government actually gave this permit to facilitate Russia selling energy to Germany instead of supporting Canadian oil and gas" Genuis said at the HoC. "That wasn't in support of Ukraine. I'd like to table it out".

However, upon asking whether there were house members opposed to the petition, several "Nays" could be heard. The HoC Speaker Greg Fergus informed that he could not share unanimous consent as some lawmakers opposed tabling Genuis motion.

In July 2022, Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson said Canada was providing a sanction waiver to Germany's industrial giant Siemens to service and repatriate Nord Stream 1 turbines being maintained at the company's facilities in Montreal.

Ottawa revoked the special permit in mid-December over Russia's "clear intentions" to never return the Nord Stream pipelines into full operations after it was rendered inoperable following a sabotage.

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Austin Welcomes Senate Confirmation of Top Pentagon Officials, Urges to Accelerate Process

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin welcomed on Thursday Senate's decision to support several top military nominees but urged lawmakers to accelerate the confirmation process.

"I am glad the Senate has today confirmed Adm. Lisa Franchetti as Chief of Naval Operations, Gen. David Allvin as Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and Lt. Gen. Chris Mahoney as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps," Austin said in a statement calling all named officials outstanding leaders.

However, he reminded that over 370 nominees are still awaiting confirmation. "This

unprecedented delay in confirming our military's top leaders has hurt our military's readiness and unnecessarily weighed down our military families, who already give up so much to support those who serve," he said.

The Pentagon continues urging the Senate to approve all remaining nominations quickly, Austin added.

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Hunter Biden Says Republicans, Media Politically 'Weaponize' His Addiction Struggles

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Hunter Biden in an op-ed piece published on Thursday voiced his concerns about the demonization of addiction by Republicans and certain media outlets, and its impact on those battling similar challenges.

"The weaponization of my addiction by partisan and craven factions represents a real threat to those desperate to get sober but are afraid of what may await them if they do," President Joe Biden's son wrote.

Hunter singled out what he saw as biased media coverage by certain conservative-leaning media outlets.

"What troubles me is the demonization of addiction, of human frailty, using me as its avatar and the devastating consequences it has for the millions struggling with addiction, desperate for a way out and being bombarded by the denigrating and near-constant coverage of me and my addiction on Fox News (more airtime than GOP presidential candidate Ron DeSantis) and in The New York Post (an average of two stories a day over the past year)," Hunter Biden said.

Furthermore, he stated that his struggles and mistakes had been utilized as material for a malicious and persistent disinformation campaign against his father, Joe Biden.

"An all-out annihilation of my reputation through high-pitched but fruitless congressional investigations and, more recently, criminal charges for possessing an unloaded gun for 11 days five years ago – charges that appear to be the first-ever of their kind brought in the history of Delaware," Hunter Biden said.

Moreover, Hunter Biden said that the utilization of his struggles with addiction by politically motivated and self-serving factions presented a legitimate concern for those individuals who sought to begin their journey towards recovery but have concerns about the possible repercussions they might face along the way.

Since 2018, Hunter Biden has been under a series of investigations into tax-related crimes, drug use, money laundering and illegal business dealings in foreign countries including Ukraine and China.

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US Forces Not Participating in Israel's Military Target Development – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – Neither the US special operations forces nor the US military in general are helping the Israeli military to develop their targets and run their defense campaign against Hamas in Gaza, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Thursday.

"The Special Operations Forces are those individuals that shortly after the October 7 attacks are helping to advise on hostage recovery, they are not participating in ... we, the US military, are not participating in IDF target development, helping them run their campaign," Ryder said during a press briefing.

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US Attacked 28 Times in Iraq, Syria Since October 17 - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US forces in Iraq and Syria have been attacked a total of 28 times since October 17, including eight attacks since October 26, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Thursday.

"Since October 26, there have been eight attacks: three in Iraq, five in Syria," Ryder said during a press briefing. "Twenty-eight total since October 17."

The latest attack on US forces in the region occurred on October 31, Ryder added.

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Texas Governor Abbott Says Met With Israel's Netanyahu in Jerusalem on Thursday

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Texas Governor Greg Abbott said on Thursday that he met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem to discuss the state's support for Israel amid the war in Gaza.

"An honor to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem today," Abbott said in a statement. "I'm in Israel to reaffirm Texas' unwavering support as the Israeli people defend their nation against Hamas' heinous acts of war."

Abbott said he also met with Israeli President Isaac Herzog to convey the same message as well.

On October 7, over 1,400 people were killed when the Palestinian Hamas movement carried out surprise attacks on Israeli communities in southern Israel.

Israel's retaliatory response against Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip has been overwhelming. To date, the Israeli bombardment has killed more than 9,000 civilians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

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US Seeking as Many Gaza Humanitarian Pauses as Possible to Get Aid In, People Out - Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States is trying to explore as many humanitarian pauses in Gaza as possible to get aid in and people out, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Thursday.

"We are really not just talking about one pause, what we are trying to do is explore as many pauses as might be necessary to continue to get aid in and to continue to get people out, including hostages," Kirby told a briefing.

Kirby stressed that by humanitarian pauses they mean temporary localized pauses in the fighting aimed at meeting certain goals, particularly getting aid in and getting people out.

On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. Several trucks with humanitarian aid have since been allowed into the exclave, home to more than 2 million people.

On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages. The escalation of the conflict has claimed the lives of more than 1,500 people in Israel and over 9,000 people in the Gaza Strip.

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Biden Does Not Think Israel Violating International Law - White House

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden does not think that Israel's actions in Gaza are in violation of international law, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Thursday.

"No," said Kirby, when asked by a reporter during a press briefing if Biden was concerned about Israel potentially violating international law.

"We've been saying it since the very beginning. . . that we want to see our good friend and partner abide by our shared commitments to the respect for civilian life and the respect for the laws of war," Kirby elaborated.

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US Healthcare Activist Ady Barkan Dies From Complications of ALS at Age 39

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US healthcare reform advocate Ady Barkan has died at the age of 39 from complications of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

"Hi all, this is Ady's wife, Rachael. I'm devastated to share the news that Ady has died from complications of ALS. You probably knew Ady as a healthcare activist. But more importantly he was a wonderful dad and my life partner for 18 years," Ady Barkan's wife Rachael wrote on social media.

According to the ALS Association, ALS, commonly known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is a progressive neurodegenerative ailment impacting nerve cells in both the brain and spinal cord.

"Ady fought for the 24/7 care he needed to be home with us until the end of his life. It's impossible to thank his incredible caregivers enough for their labor and care, which allowed us to live as a family through Ady's health challenges. Everyone should have that chance," Rachael said.

She thanked all those who had supported Ady and their family over the years, acknowledging the incredible caregivers who had become like family to them and the activists who had joined the movement he was building at the Be A Hero Fund.

According to the Be A Hero Fund website, Ady Barkan received his ALS diagnosis just four months after the birth of his son, Carl. Ady made the decision to dedicate his remaining time to the cause of reshaping the US' healthcare system. His mission was to ensure that it provides every individual with the care and respect they deserve.

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UPDATE: Blinken Says US Remains Committed to Achieving Enforcement of Nuclear Test Treaty

(Updates with background in paras 4-5)

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States remains committed to achieving the enforcement of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) despite Russia's planned withdrawal from ratification of the agreement, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday.

"The United States remains committed to achieving the entry into force of the CTBT, and we reiterate our commitment to our zero-yield nuclear explosive testing moratorium, which has been in place for 30 years," Blinken said in a statement.

It is essential that nuclear-armed countries preserve the global norm against nuclear explosive testing, the statement added.

Earlier in the day, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a bill to revoke the ratification of CTBT after he personally announced a plan to do so during the plenary session of the Valdai Discussion Club earlier in October citing the United States' stance on the issue after nearly 30 years since the signature of the treaty by Washington, it has not moved forward to ratify the treaty.

Following reports about an underground nuclear test in the US State of Nevada earlier in the month, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said

that this is a step towards escalation.

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CORRECTION - Biden Says 74 Americans Evacuated From Gaza Strip on Thursday - Press Pool

(Corrects to read "Americans evacuated from Gaza Strip," not Israel; adds background in para 4)

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Some 74 dual US citizens were able to evacuate from the Gaza Strip on Thursday, US President Joe Biden told reporters according to the White House press pool.

"Good news, we got out today 74 American folks, dual citizens," Biden said as quoted by the press pool.

Earlier this week, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said a "handful" of Americans were expected to depart the Gaza Strip on Wednesday followed by more in the future.

The United States expects to evacuate all Americans out of the Gaza enclave, but it will take a few days, according to Kirby.

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US Doctors Operate on 60 Kids in Uzbekistan, Hope to Start Program Despite Logistic Issues

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – A group of internationally renowned pediatric cardiologists from the US-based Cardial Alliance conducted 60 operations of different complexity during their initial trip to Uzbekistan and is hoping to establish a new project there despite organizational issues, the team leader Bill Novick told Sputnik.

"Altogether, we did 60 kids while we were in Uzbekistan, 48 in Nukus, and 12 in the National Children's Medical Center in Tashkent," Novick said.

All children survived operations and came back home before the visiting team left Uzbekistan, he added.

The Cardiac Alliance team, which is operating on children with heart problems all over the world, hopes to establish a new program and return to Uzbekistan for multiple trips, but Novick expressed doubts this will happen because of organizational moments.

While the team doctors volunteer during such travels and work free of charge by taking time off from their main job, the hosting side usually has to pay for air tickets, hotels, and other accommodations.

Novick pointed out that the Uzbek side now complains about the high cost of the trip. The doctor said he told them the reason the trip was so expensive is because the tickets were

bought only a week before the team was supposed to arrive.

Most of the visiting doctors were able to leave their own jobs only for some parts of the trip due to the short notice, so people were flying in and out all the time, which also made the project more expensive, he said.

The Uzbek side wanted to see Cardiac Alliance starting a new program in the city of Bukhara in November, but Novick said it was unrealistic due to the team's busy schedule.

"If they want to have us in Bukhara between January and March 2024, I need to know it by the end of November, and then we can potentially schedule the trip in February or March. I can not schedule it for January because we do not have enough time to regroup people from other trips, and then airline tickets will be expensive again," he added.

However, Novick stressed his willingness to work with Uzbekistan. He also pointed out that local colleagues want to work with Cardiac Alliance.

The Cardiac Alliance is comprised of medical specialists from different countries who usually work in different states, including in so-called "hot spots" around the world. The group has rich experience working in former Soviet republics, including Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

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US House Speaker Says Will 'Very Soon' Reach Decision on Biden Impeachment

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Thursday that lawmakers are very close to reaching a decision on whether to move forward with impeaching President Joe Biden.

"I do believe that very soon we're coming to a point of decision on it," Johnson said during a press conference, when asked about the potential for impeachment. "We're in the impeachment inquiry phase, which is an important step in that due process."

Lawmakers must respect due process and conduct appropriate investigations into the matter, Johnson said. An outcome of the probe into Biden is not predetermined, Johnson added.

In September, then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy launched an impeachment inquiry into Biden, following probes into alleged criminal activity by the president and his son, Hunter Biden. The family is alleged to have enriched themselves through foreign bribery and influence peddling.

Biden has dismissed the accusations against him, claiming to have never discussed foreign business deals with his son.

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Blinken Says Russia's CTBT Withdrawal a Wrong Turn, Jeopardizing Entry into Force

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday expressed his concerns regarding Russia's withdrawal from the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and it unfortunately represented a significant step in the wrong direction.

"Unfortunately, it represents a significant step in the wrong direction, taking us further from, not closer to, entry into force," Blinken said in a statement from the Department of State.

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Biden Says 74 Americans Evacuated From Israel on Thursday - Press Pool

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States was able to evacuate 74 dual US-Israeli citizens from Israel on Thursday, US President Joe Biden told reporters according to the White House press pool.

"Good news, we got out today 74 American folks, dual citizens," Biden said as quoted by the press pool.

Earlier this week, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said a "handful" of Americans were expected to depart the Gaza Strip on Wednesday followed by more in the future.

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FBI Raids Home of New York Mayor Adams' Fund-Raiser - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has conducted a search of the house of the Brooklyn home of Mayor Eric Adams's chief fund-raiser, Brianna Suggs, the US media reported citing two people with knowledge of the matter.

The search reportedly prompted Adams to abruptly cancel several planned meetings in Washington, D.C., where he was scheduled to talk to White House officials and Congressmen about the influx of migrants in New York, New York Times reported.

Adams went back to New York "to deal with a matter," the newspaper said, citing a spokesman for the mayor.

The newspaper also said, citing the third source, that the FBI agents from one of the public corruption squads questioned Suggs during the search

Meanwhile, an FBI spokesperson confirmed with the newspaper that they were at that location conducting law enforcement action.

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with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

URGENT: Blinken Says US Remains Committed to Achieving Enforcement of Nuclear Test Treaty

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States remains committed to achieving the enforcement of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) despite Russia's planned withdrawal from ratification of the agreement, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday.

"The United States remains committed to achieving the entry into force of the CTBT, and we reiterate our commitment to our zero-yield nuclear explosive testing moratorium, which has been in place for 30 years," Blinken said in a statement.

It is essential that nuclear-armed countries preserve the global norm against nuclear explosive testing, the statement added.

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Blinken Says Will Discuss Concrete Steps to Protect Gazans During His Trip to Israel

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters on Thursday that he is planning to discuss concrete steps that should be taken to minimize harm to civilians in Gaza, including ways to set conditions for a durable peace between Israelis and Palestinians after the ongoing conflict is over.

"We will be talking about how we can set the conditions for a durable, sustainable peace, durable sustainable security for Israelis and Palestinians alike," Blinken said ahead of his trip to Israel and Jordan. "We will be talking about concrete steps that can and should be taken to minimize harm to men, women, and children in Gaza."

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John Kerry to Meet China's Climate Envoy Xie For Talks in California - White House

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Former Secretary of State John Kerry, President Joe Biden's special presidential envoy for climate will hold talks with China's Special Envoy for Climate Change Xie Zhenhua in California for four days starting on Saturday, the White House announced in a statement on Thursday.

"Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry will travel to Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage, California, from November 4 – 7, where he will meet with PRC [People's Republic of China] Special Envoy for Climate Change Xie Zhenhua to continue discussions with the PRC to address the climate crisis," the release said.

The talks will include discussion of enhanced implementation and ambition and efforts to promote a successful COP28 - the 28th United Nations Climate Change conference to be held from November 30 until December 12, 2023, at Expo City, Dubai, the statement said.

"The meeting builds on President Biden and President Xi's meeting in Bali last year, at which the leaders agreed to work together to address the climate crisis," the release said.

It is also part of ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and responsibly manage the US-China relationship, the White House said.

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US Senate Confirms Admiral Lisa Franchetti to Be Next Chief of Naval Operations

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Thursday confirmed Admiral Lisa Franchetti to be the next chief of naval operations after a long delay.

The Senate confirmed Franchetti with a 95-1 vote.

Franchetti currently serves as the acting chief of naval operations, but had also previously served as the vice chief of naval operations between September 2022 to August 2023.

Franchetti's confirmation is the first in a string of votes expected to fill vital positions to lead the US military branches, which had been blocked by Republican Senator Tommy Tuberville since February.

The Senate is also anticipated to soon vote to confirm Gen. David Allvin to be Air Force chief of staff and Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney to be assistant commandant of the Marines, media reported.

Tuberville wanted to use his hold on military promotions to pressure the Pentagon to reverse its policy providing paid leave and travel cost reimbursement for US service members who cross state lines for an abortion.

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Karine Jean-Pierre Berated Netanyahu for 'War Crimes' Before Joining White House – Reports

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Karine Jean-Pierre harshly criticized Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2019 for his role in alleged war crimes with respect to civilians in Gaza and applauded Democratic candidates for skipping the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) during the 2020 presidential campaign, The Intercept reported on Thursday.

In her March 2019 Newsweek column, Jean-Pierre slammed AIPAC for its "racist, Islamophobic" rhetoric and for inviting Netanyahu to speak, the report said.

"Netanyahu not only has personal charges levied against him—he's been indicted on both bribery and fraud charges—but under his leadership of Israel, according to the United Nations,

Israel may have committed war crimes in its attacks on Gazan protesters," the report quoted Jean-Pierre as saying in the column.

White House spokeswoman Jean-Pierre's rhetoric today is strikingly different from her statements a few years ago. In mid-October, she called the statements by some congressmen urging an immediate ceasefire in Gaza "wrong" and "disgraceful."

When asked by a reporter at a Monday briefing whether the Biden administration considers "anti-Israel protesters" in the United States extremists, she replied: "when it comes to antisemitism, there is no place. We have to make sure that we speak against it very loud and be very clear about that." She also referred to the 2017 Charlottesville rally, when "neo-Nazis were marching down the streets of Charlottesville with vile, antisemitic" hatred.

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Illinois Senator Calls for Ceasefire in Israel-Palestine Conflict

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – Illinois Senator Dick Durbin called for a ceasefire in the Israel-Palestine conflict on Thursday, making him the first senator to do so amid staunch US support for Israel's military operations that have killed more than 9,000 Palestinians in Gaza since Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel.

"I think it is, at least in the context of both sides agreeing. For example, the release of those kidnapped should be part of this — immediate release. That should be the beginning of it, an effort should be made to engage in conversation between the Israelis and Palestinians," Durbin said in an interview with CNN, when he was asked if a ceasefire "is needed now."

The chair of the Senate judiciary committee added that the conflict had gone on for decades and "it has now reached an intolerable level."

He said he had "not communicated with the White House" about his call for a ceasefire.

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UPDATE: US Imposes Russia-Related Sanctions on 37 Individuals, 192 Entities – Treasury

(Provides additional details in paras 2, 4-5, 7, 9-12, modifies para 3)

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed new Russia-related sanctions on 37 individuals and 192 entities for their alleged role in "harmful activities" of the Russian government, the US Department of the Treasury said on Thursday.

"The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) continues to disrupt the networks and channels through which Russia attempts to sustain its beleaguered military. Today's sanctions focus on individuals and entities abetting Russia's unconscionable war against Ukraine by providing Russia with much-needed technology and equipment from third countries," the department of the Treasury said in a press release.

The sanctions list includes Russia's Arctic LNG 2, Gazpromneft subsidiaries, and the conglomerate company AFK Sistema and its three subsidiaries in Luxembourg, Singapore, and Russia, as well as a host of Russian banks, including Absolut, Pochta Bank, Russian Standard Bank.

The US imposed sanctions against dozens of manufacturers in Russia, including Absolyut Shar, Baltiyskaya Promishlennaya Kompaniya, Baltpromservis, Cybercom Limited, JSC Kompozit, Aktsionernoe Obshchestvo Lama, OOO TD Podshipnik Trade, OOO TD Sibirskiy Podshipnik, Stankomashstroy, Zavod Kompleksnye Dorozhnye Mashiny, Bazis Center LLC, according to the release.

The sanctions also affected two companies developing the attack drones Lancet and KUB-BLA, namely against Zala Aero and A Level Aerosystems CST, as well their owner Aleksandr Zakharov and his family members, the release said. The new sanctions also target the Bauman Moscow State Technical University and Russia-based metals and mining company Russian Titanium Company (Rustitan) as well as its President Anatoliy Tkachuk and Director General Alexey Novikov.

Additionally, the United States designated Artur Petrov, Russia-based Elektrokom VPK, and Cyprus-based Astraferos Technokosmos LTD for allegedly each being a part of an evasion scheme to procure US-made electronics technology for Russian end-users, the release added.

Along with a long list of more than 65 Russian entities, the new sanctions also target companies in the United Arab Emirates, China, Mongolia, Turkey, and Switzerland.

The United States has imposed sanctions against nearly ten Turkish companies, including Basilevs Lojistik Medikal Tarim Ticaret Ve Sanayi Sti, Bosphorus Gate Dis Ticaret Limited Sirketi, as well as Turkish national Berk Turken who is the owner of two more sanctioned companies BSB Grup Internet Ve Yapay Zeka Teknolojileri Anonim Sirketi and Turken Dijital Matbaa Teknolojileri Bilgisayar Bilisim Kirtasiye Fotografcilik Sanayi Ve Dis Ticaret Limited Sirketi.

OFAC also included more than a dozen companies in UAE to its new sanctions list, including 365 Days Freight Services, Alfa Logistics, Dubai Sea Breeze, Mobitronix for either delivering or supplying Russia with items in a breach of the export controls and sanction regime on Russia, according to the release. The Treasury sanctioned three companies in China, including Beijing Jiahehengde Technology Company Ltd., Beijing Shangyixianda Technology Company Ltd., China Taly Aviation Technologies Corp. for shipping to Russia high-tech electronics, optical equipment, and radar components, the release said.

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Less Than Half of US Approves of Biden, Support Down From September - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Less than half of likely voters in the United States approve of US President Joe Biden's performance, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released Thursday.

"The president earned a monthly job approval of 45% in October, down two points from

September. Fifty-four percent (54%) disapproved of his job performance in October, up three points from September,” the poll report said.

The poll comes in advance of the 2024 presidential election, in which Biden is expected to pursue the Democratic Party nomination as the incumbent. Biden's approval hit the low 40s in the first part of 2022, but rose following midterm elections, the report said.

The poll's daily presidential approval tracking involves surveying 350 likely voters per night, with monthly figures based on interviews with approximately 7,000 respondents, the report said.

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UNGA Adopted Resolution Calling to End US Economic Embargo on Cuba - Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United Nations General Assembly members adopted with overwhelming majority a resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United Nations against Cuba, Sputnik Correspondent reported on Thursday.

The voting on the resolution is as follows: 187 in favor, 2 against and 1 abstained. The only country which supported the United States was Israel. Ukraine abstained.

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Starlink Will Launch Majority of Satellites Cumulatively From Earth by Next Year - Musk

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - By next year Starlink will have launched a majority of all satellites cumulatively from earth, Elon Musk posted on X on Thursday.

“Starlink is also now a majority of all active satellites and will have launched a majority of all satellites cumulatively from Earth by next year,” Elon Musk said on his social platform X.

I am also excited to announce that SpaceX with Starlink have achieved breakeven cash flow, he added.

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Trudeau to Attend APEP Summit in Washington DC – Prime Minister Office

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will personally attend the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) Summit held in Washington D.C. on November 3, his office said on Thursday.

“The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today announced he will travel to Washington, D.C. on

November 3, 2023, to participate in the inaugural Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) Leaders' Summit, hosted by the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden," Trudeau's office statement said.

On the Summit sidelines, Trudeau is set to hold several bilateral conversations with his counterparts with discussions mainly focusing on the necessity of taking "ambitious action" on climate change, the creation of good jobs and accelerating the development of clean energy technologies, the statement said.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister will highlight Canada's leadership in the fight against climate change and position Ottawa as a strategic partner for hemispherical growth and prosperity, the statement added.

Trudeau will also present Canadian businesses as well as investment opportunities in the US, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

On November 3, Washington D.C. will host the APEP Summit. Representatives from the 12 member countries which include, Barbados, Mexico, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay among others, are set to attend.

Collectively, APEP member states account for nearly 90% of the Western-Hemisphere's GDP, and two thirds of its population.

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US Senate to Craft Its Own Foreign Aid Bill That Includes Aid to Israel, Ukraine - Schumer

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US Senate will work on its own version of a bipartisan foreign aid package that will include additional security assistance for Israel and Ukraine, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Thursday.

"The Senate will not be considering this deeply flawed proposal from the House GOP [Republicans], and instead, we will work together on our own bipartisan emergency aid package that includes aid to Israel, Ukraine, competition with the Chinese government and humanitarian aid for Gaza [that is] so much needed," Schumer said during remarks on the Senate floor.

The House of Representatives is currently working on passing Republican-led bill that would approve \$14.3 billion in emergency aid to Israel, but omits any funding for Ukraine.

Last month, the White House submitted a \$106 billion supplemental funding request to Congress to address urgent US national security concerns, which includes \$14.3 billion for Israel.

The \$14.3 billion would go towards providing security assistance such as air and missile defense support, investments to bolster the US industrial base and replenish US weapons stocks being drawn down to help Israel, according to the White House.

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Life Cycle Cost of Canada's F-35 Program Estimated at C\$73.9Bln – Budget Officer

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – Canada's Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux said on Thursday that the life cycle cost of Ottawa's F-35 program is estimated to be of C\$73.9 billion (US\$53.6 billion).

In early January, former Minister of Defense Anita Anand announced that Canada had inked a US\$14.2 billion deal with Lockheed Martin to acquire a fleet of 88 F-35 fighter jets to replace the aging F-18 fleet of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The acquisition would be made in four initial tranches starting 2026 through 2028, for 32 F-35s. The rest of the fleet would be delivered by 2032.

"Canada's F-35 program is Canada's acquisition of 88 F-35 fighter jets, including all programmed costs from the initial program development through the end of their useful life," Giroux said during a news conference.

Giroux added that the four phases of the program – development, acquisition, operations and sustainment, and disposal – will cost Canada some C\$73.9 billion. "This is roughly in line with the governments own estimate of about C\$70 billion," he added.

The operations and sustainment phase alone would cost C\$53.8 billion over a period of 30 years, Giroux said, adding that the last of the F-35 would be retired in 2060-2061.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau campaigned in the 2015 elections, promising not to acquire the F-35 fighter jets fleet as proposed by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

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US Vice President Harris Discusses Gaza, Ukraine With UN Chief Guterres - White House

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres met in the United Kingdom to discuss issues including the situation in Gaza and the conflict in Ukraine, the White House said on Thursday.

"The Vice President and the Secretary General discussed recent progress to increase the flow of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population of Gaza as well as the urgent need to dramatically increase the pace and scale of those deliveries to ensure the flow of food, water, and medicine while restoring basic services," the White House said in a statement.

Harris and Guterres discussed necessary steps to ensure that aid organizations effectively distribute assistance in Gaza, the statement said.

The two leaders also discussed the conflict in Ukraine, the statement said. Harris underscored the importance of continuing support for Ukraine, the statement said.

Additionally, Harris and Guterres discussed the situation in Haiti and the need to mobilize international support for a security mission in the country, the statement said.

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with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Yellen Ahead of APEC Summit Says US Deepening Economic Ties With Indo-Pacific

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in a major speech on Thursday will dismiss claims that the United States is turning away from the Indo-Pacific, according to excerpts from her remarks.

The speech comes ahead of the APEC summit in San Francisco and the anticipated meeting between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping later this month.

"As we look toward APEC later this month, let me state unequivocally: claims that America is turning away from the Indo-Pacific are wholly unfounded. We are deepening our economic ties across the region, with tremendous potential benefits for the US economy and for the Indo-Pacific," Yellen will say at an Asia Society Policy Institute event.

Yellen will also highlight three priorities shaping the US economic strategy in the region:

"increasing trade and investment, bolstering our economic resilience, and cooperating on global challenges."

Noting that trade between the US and the Indo-Pacific region has steadily increased over the past decade, reaching \$2.28 trillion in 2022, Yellen will highlight the rapidly-growing Indo-Pacific region as a valuable customer base for US companies and workers.

Yellen will also stress that while pursuing greater economic integration with the Indo-Pacific, the US government is promoting a level playing field for American workers. She will argue that increased trade and investment with the Indo-Pacific will support the growth of jobs in the US and that economic engagement with the Indo-Pacific is critical to bolstering the security of US supply chains.

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US House Speaker Johnson Says Will Consider Ukraine Aid, Border Security 'in Short Order'

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives will soon consider legislation pairing aid for Ukraine with domestic border security measures, House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Thursday.

"Ukraine will come in short order. It will come next," Johnson said during a press conference.

"We want to pair border security with Ukraine, because I think we can get bipartisan agreement on both of those matters."

The United States has obligations around the world but has to take care of its "own house" first, Johnson said. The US must secure its own borders while it also helps to defend Ukraine's, Johnson added.

House lawmakers are set to vote on a \$14.3 billion Israel aid package later on Thursday, which was split from the Biden administration's larger \$106 billion supplemental funding request, which also included Ukraine aid and border security funding.

The US Senate is working on its own emergency aid package that includes both Israel and

Ukraine aid, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer also said on Thursday.

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US Sanctions Senior Officials With Russian Ministries of Economy, Industry, Emergencies

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States has sanctioned Russian deputy ministers of industry, digital development and energy as well as several senior officials with the ministries of economic development and emergencies, the State Department said on Thursday.

"Pursuant to section 1(a)(iii)(A), the following individuals are being designated for being or having been a leader, official, senior executive officer, or member of the board of directors of the Government of the Russian Federation: ALEKSEY SERGEEVICH BESPROZVANNYKH is a Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation. ANASTASIYA BORISOVNA BONDARENKO is a Deputy Minister of Energy of the Russian Federation," the State Department said in a fact sheet.

The sanctions also target Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Viktor Evtukhov, Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media Oleg Kachanov, Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media Dmitriy Oguryaev, Director of the Legal Department of the Ministry of Economic Development Lev Gershanok, and Deputy Minister for Civil Defense, Emergencies, and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters Aleksey Serko.

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US Sanctions Firms Supplying Dual-Use Microelectronics to Russian Military - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed sanctions on companies supplying dual-use microelectronics and other technology to Russia's defense industry, the State Department said on Thursday.

"The Department is also taking action against a network of companies supplying dual-use microelectronics and other technology for Russia's defense industry," the statement said.

The US imposed sanctions on electronic components distributors Baltelektron, Makro Tim, and Comfort Max, as well as Mongolia-based Dafeng and Hong Kong-based Neway Technologies Limited.

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US Sanctions Creator of Russia's Lancet Suicide Drones - State Dept

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States on Thursday imposed sanctions on the creator and designer of Russia's Lancet suicide drones, Aleksandr Zakharov.

"Pursuant to section 1(a)(i), the following individual is being designated for operating or having operated in the defense and related materiel sector of the Russian Federation economy and pursuant to section 1(a)(iii)(C) for being or having been a leader, official, senior executive officer, or member of the board of directors of ZALA, a person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 14024: ALEKSANDR VYACHESLAVOVICH ZAKHAROV (ZAKHAROV)," the State Department said in a press release.

The State Department added that Zakharov is the owner of ZALA and CST and the creator and designer of the KUB-BLA and Lancet suicide drones.

Zakharov's wife Svetlana Zakharova, their daughter Maria Osetrova and sons Lavrentii Zakharov and Nikita Zakharov have also been designated.

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US Authorizes US Persons, Entities to Pay Taxes, Fees in Russia Through January 31, 2024

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The US Treasury has issued a license authorizing US persons and entities to pay taxes and fees in Russia through January 31, 2024.

"Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this general license, U.S. persons, or entities owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by a U.S. person, are authorized to pay taxes, fees, or import duties, and purchase or receive permits, licenses, registrations, certifications, or tax refunds ... provided such transactions are ordinarily incident and necessary to the day-to-day operations in the Russian Federation of such U.S. persons or entities, through 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time, January 31, 2024," the license said.

The license does not authorize any debit to an account on the books of a US financial institution of the Russian central bank, the National Wealth Fund, or the Ministry of Finance. The document does not authorize any transactions otherwise prohibited by the Russian Harmful Foreign Activities Sanctions Regulations, it added.

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US Imposes Russia-Related Sanctions on 37 Individuals, 192 Entities - Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed new Russia-related sanctions on 37 individuals and 192 entities for their alleged role in "harmful activities" of the Russian government, the US Department of the Treasury said on Thursday.

Along with a long list of Russian entities, the new sanctions also target companies in the United

Arab Emirates, China, Mongolia, Turkey, and Switzerland.

The sanctions list includes Russia's Arctic LNG 2, Gazpromneft subsidiaries, and the conglomerate company AFK Sistema as well as a host of Russian banks, including Absolut, Pochta Bank, Russian Standard Bank.

The new sanctions also target the Bauman Moscow State Technical University and Russia-based metals and mining company Russian Titanium Company (Rustitan) as well as its President Anatoliy Tkachuk and Director General Alexey Novikov.

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Blinken Discusses Gaza Humanitarian Needs, Regional Stability With Saudi Defense Chief

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the Israel-Palestine conflict with Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud, focusing on the humanitarian crisis and regional stability, the State Department said on Thursday.

The two met in Washington on Wednesday.

"The Secretary affirmed the importance of addressing humanitarian needs in Gaza, preventing further spread of the conflict, and reinforcing regional stability and security, including in Yemen," the release stated.

Blinken also emphasized the importance of working toward sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as Saudi Arabia's efforts to secure a durable peace agreement in Yemen.

He also affirmed the enduring value of the US-Saudi strategic partnership and the US commitment to support the defense of its partners against threats from state and non-state

actors.

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US Calls for End to Attacks in North Darfur – State Department

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The United States calls for warring parties to stop further attacks in the El Fasher region of North Darfur in Sudan, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday.

"The United States calls on the warring parties to immediately cease further attacks in and around El Fasher to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law concerning civilians as reaffirmed in the May 11 Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan. We echo Governor Nimr Abdulrahman's appeal to the warring parties to allow civilians to safely move to more secure areas," Blinken said in a statement.

He cited reports of an imminent large-scale attack by Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on El Fasher that would subject civilians, including hundreds of thousands of displaced persons – many of whom only recently fled there from other areas – to extreme danger. Credible reports indicate that both the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have failed to prevent civilian casualties in residential neighborhoods of El Fasher, the statement added.

The increased fighting in El Fasher follows recent RSF offensives in Nyala, Zalingei, and elsewhere in Darfur. Blinken condemned reported abuses by the RSF and allied forces in connection with their assault on Nyala, including civilian deaths, arbitrary arrests, detention of medical personnel, and looting of health facilities.

He said there was "no acceptable military resolution to this conflict" and called on the SAF and RSF to use the recently-resumed Jeddah talks to facilitate humanitarian access and ceasefires.

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Increasing Number of Americans Say Support for Ukraine Excessive – Poll

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – American views on supporting Ukraine have shifted, with a growing percentage of the public saying the US is "doing too much," according to a Gallup poll released Thursday.

Forty-one percent of Americans say the US is "doing too much" – an increase from 29% in June. A third say the US is doing the "right amount," down from 43% in June.

The shift has occurred along partisan lines, with an increasing number of Republicans (62%) and independents (44%) seeing the US as "doing too much" since Gallup began tracking sentiment in August 2022. In contrast, only 14% Democrats hold this view.

Fewer Americans also believe the US should stay in the course, with 43% saying the US

should try to end the conflict as quickly as possible even if that means Ukraine cedes territory to Rus

sia.

This marks an increase of seven percentage points since June. Of this group, 55% are Republicans, 49% are independents, and 19% are Democrats.

An overwhelming 84% of Republicans also believe there should be limits on financial aid provided to Ukraine, compared to 63% of independents, and 34% of Democrats.

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US Defense Secretary to Visit India, South Korea, Indonesia Next Week – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will visit India, South Korea, and Indonesia next week, the Pentagon said on Thursday.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III will depart next week for a trip to India, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Indonesia," the Pentagon said in a statement.

In India, Austin will discuss expanding defense industrial cooperation, enhancing interoperability, and advancing innovation through the India-US Defense Acceleration Ecosystem. He will also participate in the fifth 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue and meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In South Korea, the secretary will take part in the inaugural ROK-UN Command Member States Defense Ministerial Meeting and meet with US military commanders and service members on the Korean Peninsula.

In Indonesia, the Pentagon chief will attend the 10th ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus.